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(R)evolutionary Animal Tropes in the Works of Charles Darwin and Virginia Woolf

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Abstract

This thesis is the first full-length study of Woolf's preoccupation, across her writing, with Darwin's works. I will draw on the recent animal turn in literary criticism to provide original insight into the politics of Darwin's animal tropes, and Woolf's Darwinian animal tropes. My central research questions are how, to what extent, and with what effect, did Woolf engage with Darwin's works, particularly his animal tropes? I will make two key claims in this thesis. First, I will argue that Woolf's engagement with Darwin's works – particularly the critically overlooked *Descent of Man* (1871) – was more sustained, extensive, and subversive than previously recognised. Both Darwin and Woolf were concerned with the limitations and (r)evolutionary potential of figurative language, in Darwin's case to describe the world, and in Woolf's case to constitute the world. I use the term (r)evolutionary to invoke both Darwin's revolutionary theory of evolution and the revolutionary potential of Woolf's evolving, Darwinian, beastly 'chain of tropological transformations' (de Man 241) to *re*constitute the world. I will demonstrate that both writers' works swarm with literal (yet always already discursive) and figurative animals which operate as signifiers overloaded 'to the point of Benjaminian allegorical ruin' (Goldman 2010 180). These tropes often gesture towards women, people of colour, and the working classes, and animals themselves. I will argue secondly, therefore, that analysing these unstable animal tropes can provide insight into the gender, racial, class, and animal politics of each writer. I will show that while Woolf embraced Darwin's radical levelling of species she challenged the proto-eugenicist and misogynist aspects of his work. More specifically, I will analyse Woolf's (r)evolutionary Darwinian pedigree politics of breeding figuration in chapter two; her anti-eugenicist dogs in *Flush: A Biography* (1933) in chapters three and four; her (anti)imperialist feathers in 'The Plumage Bill' (1920) in chapter five; and her 'dictator' worms (*TG* 135) in her feminist polemics *A Room of One's Own* (1929) and *Three Guineas* (1938), in chapter six.

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Abbreviations

Abbreviated titles of Woolf's works and date of first publication:

AROO A Room of One's Own (1929)

BA Between the Acts (1941)

CH Carlyle's House and Other Sketches (2003)

CSF The Complete Shorter Fiction (1985)

D The Diary of Virginia Woolf (5 vols.) (1977-84)

E The Essays of Virginia Woolf (6 vols.) (1987-2011)

F Flush: A Biography (1933)

HPGN Hyde Park Gate News (2006)

JR Jacob's Room (1922)

L The Letters of Virginia Woolf (6 vols.) (1975-1980)

M Melymbrosia (1982)

MB Moments of Being (1972)

MD Mrs. Dalloway (1925)

MHP Monk's House Papers (microfilm, unpublished)

FMS1 The first manuscript draft (21 July 1931–April 1932) *of Flush: A Biography* (forthcoming)

FMS2 The second manuscript draft (July–October 1932) of *Flush: A Biography* (forthcoming)

ND Night and Day (1919)

O Orlando: A Biography (1928)

P The Pargiters: The Novel-Essay Portion of The Years (1977)

PA A Passionate Apprentice (1990)

PH Pointz Hall (1983)

RF Roger Fry: A Biography (1940)

RN Reading Notebook (1983)

TG Three Guineas (1938)

TL To the Lighthouse (1927)

W The Waves (1931)

Y The Years (1937)

WF Women & Fiction (1992)

VO The Voyage Out (1915)

Abbreviated titles of Darwin's Works and date of first publication:

Autobiographies – The Autobiography of Charles Darwin: With Two Appendices, Comprising a Chapter of Reminiscences and a Statement of Charles Darwin's Religious Views, by his Son (1887)

Descent – The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex (1871)

Expression – The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals (1872)

Journal – Journal of Researches into the Natural History and Geology of the Countries Visited during the Voyage of H.M.S. 'Beagle' Round the World, under the Command of Capt. FitzRoy (1839)

Origin – On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life (1859)

Variation – The Variation of Animals and Plants Under Domestication (1868)

Worms – The Formation of Vegetable Mould Through the Action of Worms (1881)

Chapter One

The 'Entangled Bank': Darwin and Woolf's Animal Tropes

Section 1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 'Little Animal That I Am'

Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* (1931) includes a striking example of her use of Darwinian animal tropes. Halfway through the novel, Jinny catches sight of her ageing reflection in a windowpane in Piccadilly tube station, where '[m]illions *descend* those stairs in a terrible *descent*' (emphasis added *TW* 114):

> Little *animal* that I am, sucking my flanks in and out with fear, I stand here, palpitating, trembling. But I will not be afraid. I will bring the whip down on my flanks. I am not a whimpering little *animal* making for the shadow. It was only for a moment, catching sight of myself before I had time to prepare myself as I always prepare myself for the sight of myself, that I quailed. It is true; I am not young – I shall soon raise my arm in vain and my scarf will fall to my side without having signalled. I shall not hear the sudden sigh in the night and feel through the dark someone coming. There will be no reflections in window-panes in dark tunnels. I shall look into faces, and I shall see them seek some other face. I admit for one moment the soundless flight of upright bodies down the moving stairs like the pinioned and terrible *descent* of some army of the dead downwards and the churning of the great engines remorselessly forwarding us, all of us, onwards, made me cower and run for shelter (emphasis added *TW* 114).

The opening line might be read both as a Darwinian truism – humans are animals – or as a metaphor. The frightened animal is both a literal description of Jinny, and gesture towards human feelings of entrapment (in 'dark tunnels'), anxieties around ageing and mortality ('I am not young'), and/or modernity ('great engines remorselessly forwarding us') (114). As a metaphor the animal disavows Jinny's animality: the animal cannot be both vehicle and tenor in a metaphor, for the vehicle signifies that which it is not.

A trope, or *tropos* ('to turn'), is 'a word or expression used in a different sense from what it properly signifies. Or, a word changed from its proper and natural signification to another, with some advantage,' where, as Srivinas Aravamudan observes, 'the tenor is changed by the vehicle' (Aravamudan 1). Tropes include figures of speech such as metaphor, metonymy, and irony whereby one signifier stands in for another signified. So, what kind of animal trope is this? Is it a metaphor, a truism or, paradoxically, both? And what kind of animal is Woolf invoking here? The whipped flanks imagery points towards domesticated animals such as dogs or horses, while the term 'flanks' is technically applicable to humans, and it is only humans who 'bring down the whip' (114). But just as Jinny reassures us that she is not an animal – or rather, that she is a human animal – her verb 'quailed' names a small game bird (114). The trope turns from the mammalian to the avian, and the paradoxical 'flight' of upright bodies. These bodies are both human, 'upright' bipeds, and animalised by their flight – a term which suggests both fleeing and flying – as well as by their animal 'descent' (114). Woolf builds layers of signification in this passage which gesture towards animality and draw attention to the act of human animals figuring animals as tropes, keeping open the possibility that the 'little animal' invokes one or multiple species (including humans). This is a paradoxical animal trope then, which is both figure and fact, which breaks open figuration by suggesting that the animal is both

vehicle and tenor when this is, strictly speaking, impossible: at least within a singular reading of the text. Woolf's animal tropes here are Darwinian and form a multivalent 'chain of tropological transformations' (de Man 241).

All of this is framed by a preoccupation with descent as a metaphor for ageing in Woolf's passage. According to Gillian Beer's ground-breaking *Darwin's Plots* (1983), evolution is 'the most powerful new metaphor of the past 150 years,' partly because:

> The analogy between ontogeny (individual development) and phylogeny (species development) has proved to be the most productive, dangerous, and compelling of creative thoughts for our culture, manifesting itself not only in biology, but also in psychology, race theory, humanism, and in the homage of our assumptions about the developmental pattern of history (Beer 6).

Descent, as we shall see, was one such evolutionary metaphor, and Woolf here blurs the distinction between ontogeny – Jinny ageing – and phylogeny: the development of the human species in the age of modernity. Furthermore, Woolf's 'great engines remorselessly forwarding us, all of us, onwards' are both London's tube trains *and* a metaphor for the natural laws which drive animals, all of us, forward. In this passage then, Woolf uses Darwin's metaphor of descent and adjacent animal tropes, and creates her own evolutionary-transport metaphor, in a complex, contradictory chain of figuration. This thesis aims to explore these beastly, multivalent, self-reflexive, paradoxical, and messy Darwinian tropes across Woolf's works, including her Darwinian dogs, horses, and leopards in her auto/biographies, and feathers and worms in her feminist polemics and novels.

This thesis is the first full-length study of Woolf's preoccupation, across her writing, with Darwin's works. I will draw on the recent animal turn in literary criticism to provide original insight into the politics of Darwin's animal tropes, and Woolf's Darwinian animal

tropes. My central research questions are how, to what extent, and with what effect, did Woolf engage with Darwin's works, particularly his animal tropes? I will make two key claims in this thesis. First, I will argue that Woolf's engagement with Darwin's works was more sustained, extensive, and subversive than previously recognised. I pay particular attention to the *Descent of Man* (1871) which Woolf critics have overlooked (they tend to focus on Darwin's 1839 *Journal of Researches*). Both Darwin and Woolf were concerned with the limitations and (r)evolutionary potential of figurative language, in Darwin's case to describe the world, and in Woolf's case to *constitute* the world, as we shall see. I use the term (r)evolutionary to invoke both Darwin's revolutionary theory of evolution and the revolutionary potential of Woolf's evolving, Darwinian, beastly 'chain of tropological transformations' (de Man 241) to *re*constitute the world. I will demonstrate that both writers' works swarm with literal (yet always already discursive) and figurative animals which operate as signifiers overloaded 'to the point of Benjaminian allegorical ruin' (Goldman 2010 180).[1] These tropes frequently gesture towards marginalised women, people of colour, the working classes, and animals themselves. I will argue secondly, therefore, that analysing these unstable animal tropes can provide insight into the gender, racial, class, and animal politics of each writer. I will show that while Woolf embraced Darwin's radical levelling of species she challenged the proto-eugenicist and misogynist aspects of his work. More specifically, I will analyse the (r)evolutionary development of Woolf's subversive Darwinian animal tropes including her pedigree politics of breeding across her works in chapter one; her anti-eugenicist dogs in *Flush: A Biography* (1933) in chapters three and four; her (anti)imperialist feathers in 'The Plumage Bill' (1920) in chapter five; and her 'dictator' worms (*TG* 135) in her feminist polemics *A Room of One's Own* (1929) and *Three Guineas* (1938), in chapter six.

[1] Date given where this thesis cites several publications by the same author.

This introductory chapter will begin by demonstrating Woolf's engagement with Darwin and his family, considering instances of the word 'Darwin' across her works. In sections 1.2 and 1.3, I will outline my understanding of the politics of Woolf and Darwin's animal tropes, and why such tropes demand scholarly attention, particularly considering the stakes of the figurative and the literal in animal discourse. I will also show that Darwin has been and should be read as a (r)evolutionary *literary* writer, concerned with the limits and potential of figurative language, like Woolf. In section 1.4, I will put my innovative tropological animal studies methodology into practise with analysis of some Darwinian passages from Woolf's first novel, *The Voyage Out* (1915), showing how my approach differs from previous Woolf scholarship on Woolf and Darwin. In section 1.5, I will give an overview of Woolf scholarship that focuses on animals and on Darwin, arguing that this is a prescient moment to read Woolf's works through the lens of animal studies. Finally, in section 1.6, I will give a summary of my thesis chapters.

Although several critics have explored Darwinian aspects of Woolf's work (as I will discuss below), Joseph Kreutziger's 2017 thesis on Woolf's Darwinian time and evolutionary form is the only extensive treatment of Woolf's engagement with Darwin. Kreutziger focuses, as most Woolf scholarship on Darwin does, on her early work – in his case *The Voyage Out* (1915), *The Mark on the Wall* (1917), *Night and Day* and *Kew Gardens* (1919), and short prose including 'A Dialogue Upon Mount Pentelicus,' and 'Phyllis & Rosamund' (both 1906) – and not on animals at all. Gillian Beer's foundational *Darwin's Plots* (1983), the first sustained study of Darwin as influencing and influenced by literature, explains the lack of book-length works on Woolf and Darwin. Beer says '[w]e all live within post-Darwinian assumptions now, and hence, paradoxically, we are not alert to the extent to which imaginatively we take for granted shapes for experience suggested by his theories and their extensions' (1996 19). Darwin's influence on Woolf and modernism more broadly has been too obvious, perhaps, to receive much critical consideration after Beer's work (more

on this below), yet that is the very reason such influence demands scholarly attention. Furthermore, Beer's seminal chapter on narratology, Woolf, Darwin, and prehistory in *Virginia Woolf: The Common Ground* (1996) was written before the current animal turn in literary criticism. Revisiting the connection between Darwin and Woolf through their animal tropes enables us to explore these writers' figurative language in new ways using different animal studies approaches (a discipline I will outline below).

In addition to providing new insights into Woolf's works using these approaches, this thesis contributes to scholarship beyond Woolf studies. I offer new ways of reading animals in literature more broadly, unpacking the multivalent, messy intersectional politics of animal tropes in ways useful to animal studies. Woolf's writing anticipates and articulates pressing concerns in contemporary animal studies where, as posthumanist scholar Donna Haraway demonstrates, 'flesh and figure are not far apart' (2003 32), but are, to use her Darwinian term, 'entangled' (Haraway 2008 4, *Origin* 360). Indeed, Haraway's work on animal figuration calls for 'A Category of One's Own,' a phrase coined specifically 'in honour of Virginia Woolf,' for 'forging new [multispecies] possibilities' (2003 88). These figurations have implications for actual animals whose sentience is still under debate despite over 200 years of Darwinism (see chapter four) and who are rapidly vanishing during the current sixth mass extinction (see chapter five). At the same time, western political discourse still dehumanises marginalised people, including women, racialised others, and the working classes, through animal tropes. Animal studies is concerned with literal and tropological animals (Haraway, Oritz Robles, Goldman) and their discursive synonyms, animalised humans (Boisseron, Gosset, Deckha). The target audience of this thesis therefore extends beyond Woolf studies to animal studies in general, for we shall see that both Darwin and Woolf lead us to animal studies, which could not exist without them.

1.1.2 'What next? Darwin?'

In her final diary entry (8 March 1941), Virginia Woolf wrote, '[s]uppose I selected one dominant figure in every age & wrote round & about' (*D*5 358). This idea had been taking shape for some time. A year earlier, she had written in her diary of one such dominant figure (24 March 1940):

> I'm beginning Sense & Sensibility – & reading about Apes. That reminds me – to do a C[ommon]. R[eader]. On Darwin. V[oyage]. of the Beagle one section: Downe [House] the other. So when I'm quit of R[oger Fry]. & of the W[orkers'] E[ducational] A[ssociation] I shall do little articles – & oh the relief of not having the whole building of a book on my shoulders! (*D*5 274).[2]

This idea for a Common Reader on Charles Darwin's foundational HMS *Beagle* voyage, which underpinned his theory of evolution, and on his home Down House in Kent, developed over the summer. She wrote (10 June 1940):

> I'm not in the mood for memoirs. What next? Darwin? Mme de Stael? It must be solid, yet short. I must put my head to the gallop, so as to cover these weeks. PH [*Pointz Hall*, a draft of *Between the Acts*] can be finished. And my Sketch of the Past continued [her memoir]. Some experiment I think. The old book of critical excursion, perhaps… Yes, an experiment not a drudge (*D*5 294).

Woolf again emphasised the project's focus on Darwin, developing the experimental critical approach she would take to writing, 'around & about' this 'dominant figure' of the Victorian era. (Her other subject, Baroness Anne Louise Germaine de Staël-Holstein (1766-1817), was a Swiss-French political theorist). We shall see that the 'solid' form of this 'excursion'

[2] Woolf was completing a biography of art critic Roger Fry and teaching classes at the Workers' Educational Association. Darwin's house is variously spelled Downe and Down.

reflected and perhaps challenged what she saw as the Darwin family trait of 'solidity' (*L*3 144, *L*4 423). Her Darwin project would have been the culmination of a life's preoccupation, engagement with, and subversion of, Darwin's works and theories, as this thesis demonstrates.

In October 1940, however, her home in Mecklenburgh Square was bombed during the Blitz. Woolf recorded in her diary (20 October 1940) the 'heap of ruins,' and 'rubble where I wrote so many books' and where there were now '[b]ooks all over dining room floor' (*D*5 331). She 'began to hunt out the diaries. What cd we salvage in this little car? Darwin, & the Silver, & some glass & china. […] I forgot the Voyage of the Beagle' (*D*5 331). Whether or not she was salvaging Darwin's works for her new project one can only speculate, but his writing was evidently important enough to her to be one of the few things she retrieved from her ruined home. Indeed, while there is no evidence that Woolf began this project, I will show that she was preoccupied with Darwin's work throughout her life and writings.

1.1.3 Woolf Reads and Writes the Darwins

The library of Virginia Woolf (and her husband Leonard Woolf) held copies of Darwin's *Journal of Researches into the Natural History and Geology of the Countries Visited during the Voyage of H.M.S. 'Beagle' Round the World, under the Command of Capt. FitzRoy* ([1839] second edition 1879), gifted by her father Leslie Stephen, and inscribed 'From the Author with vy kind regards' (Scott 45); *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* ([1859] sixth edition 1897), a school prize inherited from her brother Thoby on his death in 1906; a 1901 uniform edition of *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* (1871), and *The Autobiography of Charles Darwin: With Two Appendices, Comprising a Chapter of Reminiscences and a Statement of Charles Darwin's Religious Views, by his Son* ([1887-

1903] 1929) (King and Miletic-Vejzovic np).[3] Darwin's daughter Henrietta Litchfield gifted Woolf a copy of *Emma Darwin, Wife of Charles Darwin: A Century of Family Letters by her Daughter* (1904) which she had edited. The Woolfs' Hogarth Press also published Darwin's granddaughter Frances Cornford Darwin's poetry, *Different Days* (1928), and Reginald Snell's biography *Darwin* (1937) through the Hogarth Press (King and Miletic-Vejzovic 2003 np). We shall see that Woolf probably read most, if not all, of these books. Indeed, she may even have set the type for the Hogarth publications (Battershill 3) a few years before proposing her project on Darwin.

As early as 1896, Woolf, aged fourteen, wrote that 'Father says they have discovered an ape which is nearer to a man than anything else which has yet been found' (*L*1 2), implying 'familiarity with Darwin's explanation of the descent of man' (Alt 2016 250). Stephen attributed his loss of faith to reading *On the Origin of Species* (1859), was a supporter of evolutionary theory, and may well have discussed Darwin with Woolf (Beer 1996 13). Years later (10 September 1918), while staying in her country retreat in Sussex Woolf wrote in her diary, perhaps thinking of Down House in nearby Kent, that '[a]t Ashenham, I naturally bethink me of Darwin and Plato; but in this I am not singular' (*D*1 192). Woolf never met Darwin, who died in 1882, the year she was born, but she knew the Darwin family well. Indeed, Darwin was friends with her father Leslie Stephen and consulted his work when revising the *Descent of Man* (see chapter three). Darwin also knew Woolf's aunt Anne Thackeray, whom Woolf describes in her essay 'The Enchanted Organ' (1924), turning up at Darwin's Down House 'precisely a week before she was expected, and making Charles Darwin laugh' (*E*3 400). Woolf was friends with Darwin's grandchildren, particularly Gwen (née Darwin) and her husband Jacques Raverat, and uses the name Darwin at least eighty times across her diaries, letters, and published works (Hussey 1997 np).[4] She

[3] I refer to the 1845 revised edition throughout because the Woolf library contains this second edition (albeit republished in 1879).
[4] See Bluemel on Woolf and Gwen Raverat.

frequently refers to the Darwin family whom she visited at Newnham Grange, Cambridge, including Charles Darwin's son Francis and his wife (Woolf's first cousin) Florence; his granddaughters Gwen Raverat, Frances Cornford, and Nora Barlow (all née Darwin), his grandson Bernard and Bernard's wife Elinor. Below are a few key examples highlighting Woolf's views on the family.

As a result of her familiarity with the Darwins, Woolf suggested that there was a 'Darwin ware that never cracks' (*D*2 19) and that 'all Darwins incline that way' (*L*2 377). She wrote in her diary of seeing an unknown but instantly recognisable 'plain woodfaced Darwin – which?' (*D*2 223), and on another occasion observes that an 'unknown guest, was something like a Darwin, broad, thick, powerful, & a great mathematician, & clumsy to boot' (*D*2 231). This type had set characteristics, 'the Darwins in old Cambridge – the same dress, & nice intelligent faces' (*D*4 312). She discusses the Darwin type in her 1920s letters to Jacques Raverat, 'the bad Frog,' about Gwen, 'the good Darwin' (*L*3 114). Woolf told Jacques that Gwen was, 'poor woman, a Darwin to the backbone' (*L*3 78), that she was 'a Darwin, of all races the most monolithic' (24), remarking on 'the granite monolithic Gwens' (136). Woolf later used granite as a simile to think through connections between truth and 'hard facts' (*E*4 473). In 'The New Biography' (1927), she writes:

> If we think of truth as something of granite-like solidity and of personality as something of rainbow-like intangibility and reflect that the aim of biography is to weld these two into one seamless whole, we shall admit that the problem is a stiff one (*E*4 473).

Her biographical writing on the Darwins anticipates this association between granite, truth, and hard fact.[5] Woolf wrote Jacques that 'the best of these Darwins is that they are cut out

[5] See Ryan 2013, pp. 26-57, on complicating this binary.

of the rock, and three taps is enough to convince one how immense is their solidity' (*L*3 144). She also described Gwen to Ethel Smyth (29 November 1931) as:

> one of my oldest friends, George Darwins [sic] daughter, all Cambridge, all Darwin solidity, integrity, force and sense – What must she do, but take to art. This she did with a scientific thoroughness [...] they both painted; she like a Darwin, by science, force, sense; and [Jacques] rather gifted but lyrical, and exact and very French (*L*4 423).

The Darwins, then, for Woolf, were a good, solid, monolithic type hewn from rock, associated with the granite of fact, science, and sense. Her focus on descent and inherited characteristics reflects an engagement with Darwinism.

Woolf's essays frequently mention the Darwins, including Charles Darwin's brother Erasmus Alvey Darwin (1804-1881) in 'Geraldine and Jane' (1929), and their grandfather Erasmus (1731-1802) in 'A Swan and Her Friends' (1907) and 'The Man at the Gate' (1940). Charles Darwin (1809-1882) appears in 'The Two Samuel Butlers' (1925) where his father Robert Darwin (1766-1848) 'suspect[s] that his son Charles has damp blankets on his bed' (*E*4 9). Meanwhile, in 'Outlines' (1925), Lady Dorothy Nevill is invited to stay with the Darwins. Woolf often uses Darwin as an exemplar of genius and achievement (usually satirically, she was aware that his status and theories were used to justify eugenics, as I discuss in chapter four). In 'Ruskin' (1950), for example, John Ruskin's 'eagerness about everything in the world is perhaps as valuable as the concentration which in another sphere produced the works of Darwin, or *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*' (*E*6 462). Likewise in 'George Gissing' (1927) we see 'a gleam of recognition that Darwin had lived, that science was developing, that people read books and look at pictures, that once upon a time there was such a place as Greece' (*E*5 536). In 'Friendships Gallery' [1907], Woolf

writes, 'Darwin had always been above normal and Chamberlain was always below' (*E*6 527), in 'Mrs Gaskell' (1910) Woolf calls Darwin the 'well-known naturalist' (*E*1 341), and in 'To Read or Not to Read' (1917) she posits Darwin as the archetypal 'well-read man' (*E*2 156). Darwin was, then, a trope, a personification of genius for Woolf, and therefore a figure through which she might interrogate the very concept of genius (see chapter two).

The name Darwin appears more in Woolf's nonfiction than her fiction. He is only named in three of her novels, and not in her feminist polemics *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas*, although Darwinian discourse permeates all her work as this thesis demonstrates. In *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), Septimus Warren Smith 'called forth' men to 'hear the truth, to learn the meaning' after 'all the toils of civilisation – Greeks, Romans, Shakespeare, Darwin, and now himself' (57) and spends his time 'devouring Shakespeare, Darwin' (72). Meanwhile, Helena Parry 'could not resist recalling what Charles Darwin had said about her little book on the orchids of Burma' (152) and Clarissa reads Thomas Henry Huxley (66), who supported evolutionary theory (Alt 2016 250). In *To the Lighthouse* (1927), Mr Bankes observes that 'We can't all be Titians and we can't all be Darwins' and 'he wondered if you could have your Darwin and your Titian if it weren't for humble people like ourselves' (60). In *Between the Acts* (1941), Isa contemplates reading 'science – [astronomer Arthur] Eddington, [Charles] Darwin, or [physicist James Hopwood] Jeans' (18). As Sam See points out, Isa 'considers reading Darwin—specifically *Descent of Man* in the early typescript' of this novel (See 647 referring to *PH* 54). Woolf, as this thesis argues, read the *Descent of Man* closely. Her few novels that name Darwin, like her letters, invoke 'an example of the apex of human achievement' (Beer 1996 19), a trope of genius, – she 'selected one dominant figure' from the 1800s '& wrote round & about' (*D*5 358).

Woolf also wrote about the Darwins in her sketches and obituaries. In a posthumously published notebook sketch, 'Cambridge' (written in 1909), Woolf describes a visit to Newnham College (later part of Darwin College). This building belonged to

Darwin's son George Darwin, who was also friends with Stephen (*CH* 20). Woolf describes the 'Darwin temperament' (6), which she finds 'altogether too definite, burly, and industrious' (8). She finds it 'strange that [George Darwin] who must have known great men, and who is always at work upon great problems, should have nothing distinguished or remarkable about him' (6). He is, she says, 'like some elderly but wiry grey terrier' (7), a possible reference to Charles Darwin's terriers whom he frequently wrote about (see chapter three). Woolf's canine simile raises questions about breeding and inherited genius (discussed in chapters two and four) and invites us to consider the role of dogs in Darwin's legacy, seeding a Darwinian canine trope that becomes complicated and multivalent in *Flush: A Biography* (see chapters three and four). She finds George's children 'more interesting,' and 'anxious to get rid of that Darwin traditional culture' which is 'all to their credit' (7). 'In Any Family Save the Darwin's' (1925), published in *The Nation and Athenaeum* as an obituary-style note on botanist Francis Darwin (George Darwin's brother), she says that '[n]o currency has stood the test of time like the Darwin currency' (*E*4 291). She adds, perhaps sarcastically, that 'no one could be in his presence without an increased respect for the family whose record he upheld, and for science which breeds so sound and wholesome a race of men' (*E*4 291). Both the early sketch and later obituary outline a preoccupation with the lasting currency of the Darwin stock, using breeding language that animalises the naturalist's family just as he used such language to explain natural selection (see chapter two).

Woolf was steeped in Darwinist thinking. As Elizabeth Lambert observes, 'Woolf's life spanned the period during which evolutionary theory, once a shocking new idea, was debated and eventually assimilated into the culture as descriptive of reality,' and Woolf's 'delight in Darwin's speculative imagination and her parody of science as a source of truth are evident in *The Voyage Out*' (1-2). Lambert explains that, throughout her youth, Woolf 'read Darwin's works and was surrounded by luminaries of evolutionary thought, including

her father, Leslie Stephen, and evolution's primary evangelist, T. H. Huxley' (3). In 1908, Woolf wrote to Clive Bell of her first novel, 'I shall re-form the novel and capture multitudes of things at present fugitive, enclose the whole, and shape infinite strange shapes' (*L*1 356). At the time, she was 'split[ting] her head' (*L*1 357) over philosopher G. E. Moore's *Principia Ethica* (1903) which, as Claire Davison points out, opens with 'a discussion of Darwinist and evolutionary ethics to expand out to aesthetic enjoyment' (Davison 9). Woolf's aims here, I argue, echo the closing line of Darwin's *Origin of Species* in which he considers 'endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful that have been, and are being, evolved' (*Origin* 360).

Section 1.2 Literary, Literal, and Figurative Animals

1.2.1 Beastly Language

In this section I will discuss my reasons for focusing on figurative language, particularly animal tropes, in Darwin and Woolf's works, before analysing some examples. Animal tropes are central, I argue, to both writers' works in (r)evolutionary ways which leads me to my innovative methodology: reading Woolf's Darwinian animal tropes through new tropological animal studies frameworks. My understanding of the politics of figurative language draws on the work of philosophers Jacques Derrida, Giorgio Agamben, and Donna Haraway; postcolonial scholars Srivinas Aravamudan and Maneesha Deckha; feminist thinkers including Claire Colebrook; and literary animal studies critics Mario Oritz Robles, Derek Ryan, and Thom van Dooren. I will consider the hierarchical, binary structures of tropes and metaphors, which themselves structure Western discourse, and the subversive potential of animal tropes. We shall see that for Darwin, language ineffectually describes the literal, and that figurative language offered crucial placeholders for a future in which the 'terms used by naturalists' 'will cease to be metaphorical, and will have plain signification' (*Origin* 357). For Woolf, on the other hand, language does not mediate our access to the

literal, but *constitutes* the literal – as she puts it 'the whole world is a work of art' for 'we are the words, we are the music, we are the thing itself' (*MB* 81). If language constitutes the literal, if language is underpinned by (gendered, racialised, classed, and animal) tropes, then what is at stake when Darwin and Woolf use animal tropes is not only the status of marginalised humans and animals, but also the hierarchical, binary logic of discourse itself, and indeed the world as we know it.

The rise of modern animal studies in recent literary (and other) scholarship is undeniable. The origin of literary animal studies is debatable, but Caroline Hovanec posits W.H Auden's essay 'Two Bestiaries' (1962) as an early example. Auden argues that literary animals are usually the subjects of fables, the vehicles of similes, allegorical emblems, props for the 'romantic encounter of man and beast,' or 'objects of human interest and affection' (Auden 300-2). Animal literature is rarely about animals. Recent years have seen the publication of the Palgrave Animal Studies in Literature Series (2015-ongoing), Mario Oritz Robles's *Literature and Animals Studies* (2016), David Herman's *Creatural Fictions* (2016), and edited volumes including *The Edinburgh Companion to Animal Studies* (2018), *Reading Literary Animals* (2019), *Animals, Animality and Literature* (2018), and *The Palgrave Handbook of Animals and Literature* (2020). Central to many of these works are questions regarding representations of animals in literature, the relationship between figurative and literal animals, and, as Derek Ryan observes, the 'paradoxical potential of literature to both explore the material lives of animals and imaginatively reconceptualise their relationship to humanity' (2019 321-22). Literature, Ryan continues, which is 'necessarily based on linguistic effects, can help us to understand our relation to creatures whose lack of (human) language has frequently been seen as a marker of their difference and inferiority' (2019 322). Literary animal studies is also concerned, then, with how the figurative shapes the literal, just as the figurative shaped Darwin's understanding of evolution.

Literary animal studies is indebted to philosophers such as Martin Heidegger, Derrida, Agamben, Haraway, Deckha, and van Dooren, whose work I outline here and analyse in later chapters. Animal studies falls under the umbrella term posthumanism (discussed in chapter five), which I will bracket for now, as this slippery term covers everything from Object Oriented Ontology and cybernetics to vibrant matter and cyborgs. My concern is with the specific figurative, literal, and discursive role of the *animal* in literature. Humans have historically been considered distinct from, and superior to, 'the traditional other of man – animals' (Atterton and Calarco xv), in Western discourse. Descartes called animals automatons, establishing the human/animal 'Cartesian cut—an inherent distinction—between subject and object' (Barad 2003 815), whereby the human subject is defined by and against the animal object. Heidegger proposed that while humans are rational and therefore *weltbildend* (world-forming), and objects-at-hand such as stones are *weltlos* (worldless), animals are *weltarm* (poor in the world) because they can register other lifeforms but do not, he argues, possess reason (Heidegger 51, 70, 19). This philosophical distinction between the human and animal relied on the understanding that *logos* – reason and language – is unique to humans. Derrida shows us, pointing to the work of Aristotle, Heidegger and Lacan, that according to Western thought the 'animal is *alogon*' – without language and reason (2011 320-1). Haraway agrees that the 'history of philosophy and of science is crisscrossed with lines drawn between Human and Animal on the basis of what counts as language' (2007 234).

This distinction between the *logon* human and *alogon* animal has been maintained by what Agamben calls the anthropological machine, whereby our humanity is separated from our animality by an internal 'caesura between the human and the animal' (16) which disavows that animality. The anthropological machine, he argues, produces the 'recognition of the human' contra the animal, and explains that 'the passage from animal to man' was:

> produced by subtracting an element that had nothing to do with either one, and that instead was presupposed as the identifying characteristic of the human: language. In identifying himself with language, the speaking man places his own muteness outside of himself, as already and not yet human (34-5).

We shall see in chapters three and four that Darwin theorises an animal *logos*, undermining the foundational assumptions of Western philosophy and the anthropological machine. For Darwin, human and animal emotions all 'evolved from animal impulses' (White 2009 813), which 'does not justify us placing man in a distinct kingdom' (*Descent* 173). Indeed, for Derrida, the word 'animal' is a 'crime' against animals because the collective noun refers to 'the animal spoken of in the general singular,' and 'applies to the whole animal realm with the exception of the human' (2002 416, 408, 409). The word is therefore a *bêtise* (asinanity) which 'confirm[s] not only the animality that [one] is disavowing but [one's] complicit, continued, and organized involvement in a veritable war of the species' (Derrida 2002 400). Derrida's neologism *l'animot* phonetically mirrors the word *animaux* (animals), whilst incorporating the word *mot* (French for word), thus drawing attention to the linguistic act that separates the signifier from its signified, to the violence done to animals by language (2002 409). Animals then, are both denied *logos* until Darwin, and are (still) subject to the violence of human language.

Haraway, building on this work, calls for animal stories that 'teach us to pay attention to significant otherness' (28). What is at stake here, she says, is 'who and what gets to count as an actor' in a post-Darwin world (2003 27). For Haraway, animals are 'powerful figures' who have 'always been where the biological and literary or artistic come together with all the force of lived reality,' and 'are at the same time creatures of imagined possibility and creatures of fierce and ordinary reality; the dimensions tangle and require response' (2008 4). Haraway's '[f]igures are not representations or didactic illustrations, but rather material-

semiotic nodes or knots in which diverse bodies and meanings coshape one another' (2008 4). These '[f]igures help [us] grapple inside the flesh of mortal world-making entanglements' (2008 4). This term entanglement is Darwinian. In the final lines of *On the Origin of Species*, he writes:

> It is interesting to contemplate an entangled bank, clothed with many plants of many kinds, with birds singing in the bushes, with various insects flitting about, and with worms crawling through the damp earth, and to reflect that these elaborately constructed forms, so different from each other, and dependent on each other in so complex a manner, have all been produced by laws acting around us (360).

Haraway's understanding of co-evolution and entanglement emerges not only from her reading of Woolf, but, possibly more so, from her engagement with Darwinism.

Darwin and Woolf's animals are literal and imagined, operating at 'the boundary between literal and figurative' (Goldman 2007 49) in stories of cross-species entanglements. For van Dooren, 'story' is a verb, a 'vital contributor to the emergence of "what is,"' and '[s]tories are part of the world, and so they participate in its becoming' (10). Woolf's animal tropes, I will argue, story questions about what we owe and how we write animals, inviting us to rethink human-animal relationships in life and literature. As Hovanec points out, in 'the age of the sixth mass extinction, it would be naïve to overstate the efficacy of animal stories, literary or scientific, for creating a more ethical way of living with other kinds of beings,' but it would also 'be naïve to think that any ethical or political action can happen without the sense of meaning and value that narrative brings' (203). Indeed, 'the animal subjects of modernist literature' might, 'in some small way, help story a more attentive, more loving relationship with the world that houses all our animal worlds' (Hovanec 204).

1.2.2 The Politics of Figurative Language

The question of the animal turn then, is intimately bound up with the question of figurative language, particularly tropes. A trope, as we have seen, or *tropos* ('to turn'), is 'a word or expression used in a different sense from what it properly signifies. Or, a word changed from its proper and natural signification to another, with some advantage,' where, as Srivinas Aravamudan observes, 'the tenor is changed by the vehicle' (1). Tropes include figures of speech such as metaphor, metonymy, and irony whereby one signifier stands in for another signified (Oritz Robles 8). In 'Why Look at Animals?' (1980) John Berger suggests that 'the first metaphor was animal' (16) and that human-animal relations have always been figurative. Such metaphors, through use, became animal tropes which 'mediate our understanding' of, and relation to, animals (Oritz Robles 19). Animal tropes, as Oritz Robles points out, often operate in literature as 'symbolic repositories for human actions, human figures, and human anxieties: warriors, evildoers, monsters, racial others, and women are often referred to as animals' (22-3). He observes that thinking 'of animals as mere tropes rather than real, living entities has no doubt contributed to the ease with which we have killed, and continue to kill, wittingly and unwittingly, unconscionable numbers of animals' and that the 'trivialization of the animal through figure comes at a steep price for humans as well since it facilitates, licenses, and indeed sanctions certain types of atrocities perpetrated on humans by other humans' (19), that is, on marginalised humans figured as animal. If tropes enable us to 'make sense of the world' – or constitute it as Woolf suggests – then the 'constant, if marginal, presence of animals in literature […] impels us to reconsider the significance of animal tropes' (Oritz Robles 19). The stakes of understanding animal tropes in and beyond literature, for animals and marginalised humans, 'are all too real and significant to ignore' (25).

Metaphor, or *metaphora* (to carry over), one of the most dominant manifestations of the trope, is traditionally considered 'the most fundamental form' of figurative language (Hawkes 1). In metaphor, the aspects of one object or subject (the tenor) are transferred to another object or subject (the vehicle) 'so that the second object is spoken of as if it were the first' (Hawkes 1).[6] The vehicle is subordinate to the tenor. The 'dualism of metaphor is neither neutral nor innocent,' as Colebrook points out, 'for one term is seen as self-sufficient and real – the literal – while another term is secondary, dependent and inessential – the figure or image' (54). Tropes and metaphors differ in their oppositional structure from other forms of figurative language: simile compares two *literal* things (A is like B), while metonymy and synecdoche operate by contiguity. I am interested in the violent binary structure of tropes and metaphors as regards gender – but also race and class – and animality, and the relationship between the figurative and the literal. For feminist scholars, 'the opposition of gender' – which 'contrasts an active masculine creativity with a passive feminine receptivity' (Colebrook 3) – is the foundational metaphor that 'structures all other oppositions' (5) in Western discourse. Simone de Beauvoir claimed that human thought is structured by 'the relation between self and other' (29), and 'woman is the exemplary Other' (19), while Hélène Cixous explores the historical 'metaphorization of masculinity and femininity' (1986 63). I am less interested in gendered metaphors than in the asymmetrical, hierarchical, and binary structure of these metaphors, and indeed of metaphors more broadly. If animals often act as figures for human concerns and are *also* the primary metaphor as Berger argues, if the primary vehicle of figurative language is both animal and woman, then it is not surprising that Woolf's feminist polemics (see chapter six) *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas*, and her wider writings, are full of animal tropes. The violently asymmetrical structure of figurative language is both gendered and beastly, and, as we shall see, racialised and classed.

[6] I. A. Richards coined the terms vehicle and tenor in 1936 (Hawkes 61).

It is worth investigating how figurative language does violence, as several scholars agree, to marginalised people and animals by using them as synonyms and tropes in which those people and animals are either vehicles subordinate to the tenor they signify, or evacuated from the signifier/signified system altogether. In her feminist, animal rights manifesto *The Sexual Politics of Meat* (1990), Carol J. Adams outlines the linguistic process which renames and objectifies animal subjects using what she calls 'mass term[s],' or 'absent referents' (2006 51). These terms (such as her example 'meat') violently evacuate the signified (dead animals) from the signifier. Adams claims that restoring absent referents is a vital political act which 'turns a 'fact' into a contradiction' (2018 xliii). Woolf, however, does not simply restore animal subjects to their mass terms, rather, she destabilises the entire logic of discourse in which the signifier is subordinate to the signified in the first place.

According to Paul de Man, a 'trope generates a norm of value,' and tropes are '[re]producers of ideologies that are no longer true' (242), generating an 'infinite chain of tropological transformations' (241). These ideologies include patriarchy, imperialism, anthropocentrism, these values include misogyny, racism, and the denigration of the animal. The increased 'variety of animal tropes' that Darwin scholar Mark Feldman observes in post-Darwinian writing, including 'the return of animality' (79), indicated 'evolutionary anxieties' (85) about Darwin's plots which, I want to suggest across this thesis, were gendered, racialised, classed, and beastly. Indeed, 'animal signifiers [are] deeply bound up with human cultural, political, and social meaning' (Chen 2012) and this thesis responds to Maneesha Deckha's call for 'intersectional analyses of animal issues' (2012). According to postcolonial scholar Srivinas Aravamudan, the 'unincorporated and unincorporable remainder' between signifier and signified allows metaphors and tropes to be 'reappropriated by resistant positions' (5). Woolf scholar Jane Goldman, drawing on Aravamudan's work, claims that Woolf 'turn[s]' sexist and racist animal 'tropes to advantage,' by 'refiguring and re-signifying them, turning them to feminist advantage' (Goldman 2007 49, 2010 180), so

extensively that she breaks open the distinction between signifier and signified, which is not to say that she abolishes it. Woolf thus shatters the hierarchical binary logic of animal tropes storying new relations between animals and their tropological synonyms, marginalised women, people of colour, and the working classes. It is the status of these animals and marginalised humans as subjects that is at stake in my thesis.

Section 1.3 Darwin and the Limits of Language

1.3.1 Darwin and Literature

Before discussing the relationship between the figurative and the literal – and so the stakes of Darwin and Woolf's animal tropes – it is worth outlining why I follow Beer (1983 4) and Hovanec (17) in reading Darwin's books as *literary* as well as scientific works. Figurative language, as Beer and Devin Griffiths point out (I discuss both below), was key to Darwin's work on evolution, as he was aware. Literary critics have studied Darwin since Beer's ground-breaking *Darwin's Plots* (1983), Margot Norris's *Beasts of the Modern Imagination* (1985), and George Levine's *Darwin and the Novelists* (1988). These texts argue that Darwin's work was shaped by one culture (rather than two; literature and science) which used figurative language freely, and that Darwin both influenced, and was influenced by, literature. There are now at least twenty-six books on Darwin and literature.[7] Scholars have considered Darwin in relation to Jane Austen (Graham), Alfred Tennyson (Purton), post-Darwin literature more broadly (Richter), prehistoric fiction (Ruddick), transatlantic literature (Jones and Sharp), Nietzsche, Kafka, Érnst, and Lawrence (Norris), and poetry (Holmes). There are numerous introductions to Darwin, science, and literature (Levine, Amigoni 1995, 2007, 2016, Dawson, Otis, and Greenberg), and some scholars read Darwin's work via his grandfather Erasmus Darwin's poetry (Page, Priestman, and Griffiths).

[7] Beer, Danta, Dawson, Engels and Glick, Gordon, Graham, Griffiths, Holmes, Jones and Sharp, Levine (2006 and 2011), Livingstone, Norris, Page, Peterfreund, Priestman, Purton, Richardson, Richter, Ruddick, Schmitt, Strom, Tholoniat, Voigts Schaff and Pietrzak-Franger, Laland, and Zarimnis.

Darwin's writing is significant in literary as well as scientific terms. Furthermore, discussions of Darwinian literary animals feature in Harriet Ritvo's *The Animal Estate* (1987), edited volumes including *After Darwin: Animals, Emotions, and the Mind* (2013), *Animals in Victorian Literature and Culture* (2017), *Victorian Animal Dreams* (2017), and Paul White's work (2006, 2009, 2011, 2013, see chapters three and four). As Greenberg puts it, '[r]econnecting Darwin's insights with those of recent theory […] can inform the understandings of a concept increasingly visible in literary studies, the animal' (436).

Darwin was concerned with the limits and possibilities of literature and figurative language as early as his *Journal of Researches* (1839), known as *The Voyage of the Beagle*, the account of his journey as ship's naturalist from 1831-1836 that underpinned his theory of evolution. (I discuss the colonial function of this voyage in chapter five). Darwin acknowledged that the 'voyage of the *Beagle* has been by far the most important event in my life and has determined my whole career' (*Autobiographies* 42). His *Journal of Researches* alludes to John Milton, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Ovid, and Virgil – works by several of these authors were in the *Beagle* library – and the Bible, and Darwin 'took much delight in Wordsworth's and Coleridge's poetry' though 'when [he] could only take a single small volume, [he] always chose Milton' (*Autobiographies* 48). (Woolf also considered Milton a favourite, with a preference for *Lycidas* (*D*3 330)). Darwin's *Autobiographies* refer to Virgil, Homer, Horace, Pliny, Lamb, Carlyle, Euclid, Shakespeare, Byron, the Bible, and Walter Scott. He claimed he 'always had some book in hand' (*Autobiographies* 26) during his voyage and that:

> [e]verything about which I thought or read was made to bear directly on what I had seen and was likely to see; and this habit of mind was continued during the five years of the voyage. I feel sure that it was this training which has enabled me to do whatever I have done in science (*Autobiographies* 43).

Darwin's scientific discoveries, then, were indebted to, and enriched by, his immersion in literature.

Perhaps because of this, Darwin struggled with the limits of language when writing. He had 'as much difficulty as ever in expressing myself clearly and concisely' which offered the 'advantage of forcing me to think long and intently about every sentence' and to 'correct [these] deliberately' (*Autobiographies* 83). He lamented that naturalists 'have indulged in rather exuberant language' and found that landscapes often 'exceeded all description' (*Journal* 435, 223). He rejected the methods of his predecessors:

> it is a hopeless attempt to paint the general effect. Learned naturalists describe these scenes of the tropics by naming a multitude of objects, and mentioning some characteristic feature of each. To a learned traveller this possibly may communicate some definite ideas: but who else from seeing a plant in an herbarium can imagine its appearance when growing in its native soil? Who from seeing choice plants in a hothouse can magnify some into the dimensions of forest trees, and crowd others into an entangled jungle? Who when examining in the cabinet of the entomologist the gay exotic butterflies, and singular cicadas, will associate with these lifeless objects the ceaseless harsh music of the latter and the lazy flight of the former — the sure accompaniments of the still, glowing noonday of the tropics? (*Journal* 470).

This passage is striking in its emphasis on affect, context, the interconnectedness of species, and his proto-modernist concern with the limits of language. Darwin argues (in response to Alexander von Humboldt's 1829 landmark study of the tropics, *Personal Narrative of Travels to the Equinoctial Regions of the New Continent, During the Years 1799-1804*

(Leask 13-36)), that by removing life forms from their context, the impression of the whole, the embodied experience of being in the tropics, is lost. The butterfly in the cabinet is a failed metonym for the jungle and using it as such does violence to both signifier and signified.

Darwin's writing, then, is concerned with conveying the affect of the 'entangled bank' of life rather than its constituent parts (*Origin* 360). Indeed, entangled organic life was also central to Woolf's understanding of the world. In her memoirs she writes:

> I was looking at the flower bed by the front door; "That is the whole," I said. I was looking at a plant with a spread of leaves; and it seemed suddenly plain that the flower itself was a part of the earth; that a ring enclosed what was the flower; and that was the real flower; part earth; part flower (*MB* 80).

Entanglement then, is a Darwinian, Woolfian concern which has shaped animal studies approaches such as the 'origin stories and irreducible entanglement' central to Haraway's theories (2007 106).

1.3.2 Darwin's Similes, Metaphors, and Analogies

Darwin found simile a useful but imperfect tool for conveying his experiences to his readers. He 'wished to find language to express [his] ideas. Epithet after epithet was found too weak' (*Journal* 471). He found 'a growing pleasure in comparing' and that 'the habit of comparison leads to generalisation,' 'sketches,' 'superficial hypotheses' (*Journal* 476, 479). He was 'tempted to pass from one simile to another' and found some birdsong to 'defy all similes' (*Journal* 188, 258). Darwin's similes are excessive. Here, he describes an earthquake:

> it was something like the movement of a vessel in a little cross-ripple, or still more like that felt by a person skating over thin ice, which bends under the weight of his body.
>
> A bad earthquake at once destroys our oldest associations: the earth, the very emblem of solidity, has moved beneath our feet like a thin crust over a fluid; — […] the whole coast [was] strewed over with timber and furniture as if a thousand ships had been wrecked […] narrow ridges were as completely shivered as if they had been blasted by gunpowder […] of the earthquake it is said that two explosions, one like a column of smoke and another like the blowing of a great whale, were seen in the bay. The water also appeared everywhere to be boiling (287-291).

There are a striking number and range of maritime, ice skating, and military similes here. Darwin's thickening of images reflects both the limitations of language – no singular simile fits his topic – and the uncontrollable outpouring of the volcano itself. They also demonstrate his conviction that language ineffectively describes rather than constituting the literal.

Metaphors were central to Darwin's writing on evolution. He acknowledged that natural selection, sexual selection, and the fight of/for survival (Darwin used both terms) were metaphors for natural laws. In the third edition of *On the Origin of Species* (1861) he wrote:

> Several writers have misapprehended or objected to the term Natural Selection. […] Some have […] objected that the term selection implies conscious choice in the animals which become modified […] In the literal sense of the word, no doubt, natural selection is a false term […] Everyone knows what is meant and

> is implied by such metaphorical expressions; and they are almost necessary for brevity (85).[8]

The reason for these misapprehensions may lie in the slippery nature of metaphor which allows a blurring of vehicle and tenor, of figurative and literal. Beer investigates the 'plots he grew up with and the plots he generated for others' (1983 xxiv), paying attention to his '[g]enerative metaphors,' which 'lead to profusion and extension' (1983 6-7). She observes that the 'unused or uncontrollable elements in metaphors such as 'the struggle for existence' take on a life of their own' (1983 6-7). Metaphor enabled Darwin to circumvent the issue of (Godly) intent, but was a dangerous 'procedure for argumentation,' as 'metaphors may overturn the bounds of meaning assigned to them' (Beer 1983 76, 50). Darwin was aware of this limitation, but also of the potential of 'unlocking of shared signification' between 'unlike objects' (1983 77). Where Beer analyses Darwin's grand narrative (evolution) and central metaphors (natural selection, survival of the fittest etc.), I am interested in specific animal tropes (dogs, feathers, worms) he uses, and how Woolf overturns and refigures these tropes.

Devin Griffiths builds on Beer's work, arguing that *analogy* is central to Darwin's thinking, indeed, Darwin 'infer[red] from analogy that probably all the organic beings which have ever lived on this earth have descended from some one primordial form' (*Origin* 1859 356). Griffiths identifies two kinds of analogy in Darwin's work. Formal (traditional) analogy, 'works from the top down, applying a pattern of relationships that are already understood in one domain to a new context' (Griffiths 36). That is, the tenor maps onto the vehicle. It might seem, for example, that Darwin maps domestic selection onto natural selection, to shed light on the latter. *Harmonic* analogy, on the other hand, 'works from the bottom up, exploring a pattern between two different sets of relationships, to see what common features the pattern picks out,' where the two sets 'stand in dialectical relation' and

[8] My references, unless stated otherwise, are to the second edition of *On the Origin of Species*.

are ‘reciprocal’ rather than ‘directional’ (Griffiths 36). Darwin’s contemporaries believed that domestic breeding could produce ‘only new breeds’ (Griffiths 34) not new species, but the central analogy (of many) in *On the Origin of Species,* comparing domestic breeding and the theory of natural selection, ‘had reverberating implications for both natural and domestic change – most immediately arguing that new species can be formed through either process’ (Griffiths 19). Harmonic analogy therefore enabled new ways of thinking about both domestic and natural selection, ‘testing each half of the analogy against the other, teasing out further features of both’ (Griffiths 35). Darwin’s domestic/natural selection analogy was both visionary (proposing the concept of natural selection) and *re*visionary (suggesting that domestic selection produces new species), with significant implications for both. Beer and Griffiths, then, have discussed how Darwin’s struggle with figuration underpinned his work. Building on their scholarship, this thesis analyses his animal tropes, particularly the trope of the dog, the feather, and the worm. Woolf engagement with these tropes is neither harmonic nor formal – we shall see that she shatters tropes through overdetermination and refigures them in subversive ways.

1.3.3 The Figurative and the Literal

The relationship between the figurative and the literal is crucial to our understanding of the stakes of disrupting tropes and metaphors as Woolf does. The ancient Greeks, such as Aristotle, understood that language ‘represent[s] other things’ (2000 85), mediates our understanding of, but is separate from, the literal (Aristotle 85, Hawkes 9). Darwin took this view, claiming metaphor was a placeholder for a future when ‘terms used by naturalists,’ such as Natural Selection, ‘will cease to be metaphorical, and will have plain signification’ (*Origin* 357). The Romantic view, conversely, understands language as *constituting* the literal, as world-forming (Hawkes 90), allowing Percy Bysshe Shelley, for example, to call poets the ‘unacknowledged legislators of the world’ (Shelley 2010 613). Woolf, in this latter

vein, writes of her 'philosophy,' that there is 'some real thing behind appearances' accessible in rare 'moments of being' and made 'real by putting it into words' (*MB* 81). Behind appearances:

> is hidden a pattern; that we —I mean all human beings—are connected with this; that the whole world is a work of art; that we are parts of the work of art. "Hamlet" or a Beethoven quartet is the truth about this vast mass that we call the world. But there is no Shakespeare, there is no Beethoven; certainly and emphatically there is no God; we are the words; we are the music; we are the thing itself (*MB* 81).

If language, for Woolf, constitutes the world then the implications of disrupting tropes – in which animals and marginalised humans are always already vehicles subordinate to the tenor – are high. What is at stake is not only the status of animals and marginalised humans, but also the binary hierarchical logic of discourse itself.

If discourse *is* the world then to revolutionise language is to revolutionise the world. Darwin claimed that when his 'views on the origin of species are generally admitted, we can dimly see that there will be a considerable revolution in natural history' (*Origin* 356). Darwin's revolution here indicates a radical change in our understanding of natural history. But revolution also means to revolve, to turn as tropes do. As Woolf put it in her diary (28 January 1918), in a cryptic portrayal of the Bloomsbury group's political debates, 'You heard, or I heard, 'it's a case of revolution or evolution' & then, if you've heard enough […] you hide yourself for precisely 10 seconds' (*D*1 115). Both revolution and evolution are radical concepts involving turnings, *tropos*. I consider both terms inextricable when analysing the development revolution and evolution of beastly tropes. Woolf's Darwinian

tropes have the (r)evolutionary potential to turn Western discourse to feminist, anti-racist/classist, and animal advantage, and we have *not* heard enough yet to understand how.

Section 1.4 Voyaging Out

1.4.1 The Darwin Centenary

Thus far, I have shown that Woolf was planning an experimental piece on Darwin in the 1940s having written about the Darwins throughout her life, and I have outlined the animal studies theoretical framework for this thesis and demonstrated Darwin's and Woolf's approaches to figurative language. I will now offer some close readings of Woolf's Darwinian animal tropes to demonstrate how my methodology differs – using tropological animal studies approaches – from other, predominantly narratological scholarship on Woolf and Darwin. First it is worth making one more biographical connection between Woolf and Darwin.

The Charles Darwin Centenary celebrations held at Christ's College Cambridge, 22-24 June 1909, commemorated the centenary of Darwin's birth and the fiftieth anniversary of *On the Origin of Species* (1859). The event celebrated his life and works with speeches, visits to his undergraduate rooms at Christ's, an exhibition in the Old Library, and a banquet (van Wyhe np). The exhibition catalogue listed 257 items including Darwin's manuscripts, books, and letters, the *Beagle* artist's watercolours, a gun case, stuffed monkey, insect net, dissecting microscope, and specimens (Shipley, Everett and Crawford Simpson np). Woolf's letters and diaries do not mention the centenary, but she visited the Darwin's in Cambridge in early 1909 (*CH* 20n1), went to Cambridge that July (*L*1 400), and may have discussed the event with Gwen, who certainly attended (Fellows' Papers Collection 56). Furthermore, Davison notes that '[n]ew editions of all Darwin's works were commissioned for the occasion, numerous commemorative and biographical studies were published, and his enduring impact in biological and social theory was largely discussed in Cambridge, within

Bloomsbury circles, and far beyond' (3). Woolf, 'living in a milieu broadly steeped in Darwinian theory and with relations in the Darwin family, was reading or re-reading his major works at the time' and these new publications 'would have circulated in the Bloomsbury milieu' including a 'centennial collection of essays, *Darwin and Modern Science*' (Davison 3). Woolf would also probably have read about the centenary in the *Times*, which she read regularly, and which featured at least nine articles and correspondence on the centenary that year.[9]

No critics, to my knowledge, have confirmed if Woolf (née Stephen) was one of over four hundred delegates at the event, although Davison observes that the seating plans for the men's and women's (separate) 23 June dinners included 'a Mr and Miss Stephen' (3). Mr Stephen was perhaps Woolf's brother Adrian Stephen (her father died in 1904 and her brother Thoby in 1906). Miss Stephen is not on the available prospective invitation lists: a draft 'List of Delegates and Other Guests' (3 June 1909), lists published in the *Cambridge University Reporter* (10 June 1909), or the 'Final Lists' (19 June 1909) in the archive (Fellows' Papers Collection, items 58 ii and vi). Many names on these lists, however, are not on the table plan and vice versa, and many guests were not publicly named (Fellows' Papers Collection 57-58). Miss Stephen may have been invited after more desired guests declined their invitations. Several of Woolf's acquaintances are named on the ladies' table plan, including Lady Darwin (one of several), Mrs Keynes (probably Margaret (née Darwin) Woolf's friend Maynard Keynes' sister-in-law), and Lady Fry (potential relative of Roger Fry) (Fellows' Papers Collection 58 item vi). Given that Leslie Stephen was close with Darwin, and that his other daughters could not have attended as Miss Stephen – Laura Makepeace Stephen was in care from 1893 until her death, Stella Duckworth died in 1897, and crucially Vanessa married Clive Bell in 1907 – I would go further than Davison and conclude that it is highly likely that 'Miss Stephen' was Woolf herself. It is probably no

[9] *The Times* 12 and 19 February, 27 May, 4, 22, 23, 24, 25 June, 17 August 1909.

coincidence that *The Voyage Out* (1915), which Woolf was drafting at the time, features two characters called Ambrose, and that Miss Stephen shared a table at the centenary dinner with one Mrs Ambrose Harding, probably wife of zoologist Walter Ambrose Harding (1870-1942). Finally, Gwen Darwin signed the exhibition guest book in the Old Library that June (Fellows' Papers Collection 56). Even if Woolf did not attend the celebrations, Gwen probably told her about it, and she would have read of the Darwin fever that gripped the British intelligentsia.

1.4.2 Beastly Voyages

Woolf scholars have demonstrated that 'Woolf draws directly on' Darwin's *Beagle* voyage narrative – his *Journal of Researches* – in her first novel *The Voyage Out* (Beer 1996 14) and was 'using metaphors and images of evolutionary discourse,' as early as her 1908 draft, provisionally titled *Melymbrosia* (Lambert 3). Elizabeth Lambert (who focuses on Woolf's feminism in the novel), Gillian Beer (who explores prehistory and narratology), and Davison (who discusses Woolf's Darwinian animals) agree that *The Voyage Out* is 'full of Darwinian echoes and references' (Beer 1996 15) and was shaped by 'Darwin's Plots' (Beer 1983 iii, Davison 6): both evolution-as-plot and the voyage plot. Furthermore, both voyage narratives were 'early works in each author's personal evolution' (Davison 12), feature naïve young protagonists (Darwin, Woolf's Rachel Vinrace) who sail from England to South America, and both include musical motifs and allusions to Milton (Davison 7-8, 24). Darwin's evolutionary theory emerges from his voyage, while a form of devolutionary feminism emerges in Woolf's text. The 'Darwinist underpinnings' of Woolf's novel are, as Davison notes, 'anything but coincidental' (12). I will consider some of these references and bring new tropological readings of Woolf's animals to these passages.

In *The Voyage Out*, Rachel sails to South America, gets engaged, and dies of a tropical disease. Rather than fulfil her societal role through marriage and voyaging home – where

'[i]nitiation into society for women involves initiation into descent. They will become vessels of descent' (Beer 1996 14) – her *bildungsroman* ends on the verge of its traditional resolution. As she dies, Rachel devolves, taking, as Davison points out, 'refuge in a less evolved form' (Davison 16): she 'might have been a shell' (*VO* 229), 'curled up at the bottom of the sea' (397). Devolution to a primordial form is a mode of rejecting the (un)natural law of marriage, of reversing the evolutionary plot. Woolf also names Darwin twice in *Melymbrosia.* Both references were excised prior to publication, perhaps because they lacked subtlety, but evidence her early engagement with Darwinism. She writes, '[w]omen, too, [Rachel] remembered, are more common than men; and Darwin says they are nearer the cow' (*M* 28), implying familiarity with his claim in the *Descent of Man* that, just as 'the bull differs from the cow,' so 'Woman seems to differ from man in mental disposition,' so that the 'average of mental power in man must be above that of woman' (629). Later, Rachel asks, 'I can be myself in spite of you, in spite of the Dalloways, in spite of William Pepper, and my father, and Darwin?' (*M* 66). In both instances, Darwinism is cast 'not as a repository of truth but as a discourse that claims the authority to interpret reality, a discourse with enormous potential mired in its own patriarchal values' (Lambert 1). Darwin is linked to misogyny then, through Woolf's references, and the marriage plot that is derailed by devolution. There are further Darwinian echoes in the novel, as when Mrs. Flushing recalls how some of her siblings 'lived; the others died. What you call survival of the fittest' (*M* 203, *VO* 274), or when, as Davison observes, Woolf's human characters practise courtship rituals (*VO* 186-7, Davison 14) akin to Darwin's 'extremely ludicrous' courting birds (*Descent* 430). I want to focus on the primordial animal trope of the shell and push Davison's devolutionary reading further.

The Voyage Out features extensive passages that strikingly resemble, but subversively rewrite, paragraphs from Darwin's *Journal of Researches*. Rachel's first view of South America from the ship echoes Darwin's arrival at Valparaiso, Chile. Woolf writes:

> At dawn they had entered the bay, and the boat was now nearing a white crescent of sand. She saw a deep green valley, and distinct hills on either side. On the slope of the right hand hill white houses with brown roofs were settled, like nesting sea birds. Cypresses striped the hills with black bars. Mountains whose sides were flushed with red, but whose crowns were bald, rose behind. As the hour was still early, the whole view was exquisitely light and airy. The blues and greens were intense but not sultry. An air seemed to be moving among the trees. On her the effect was exhilarating; after the sea, the hot earth was exciting (88).

Anchored in the bay, Darwin wrote:

> The view from the anchorage is very pretty. The town is built at the foot of a range of hills, about 1600 feet high, and rather steep [...] it consists of one long, straggling street, which runs parallel to the beach, and wherever a ravine comes down, the houses are piled on each side of it. The rounded hills, being only partially protected by a very scant vegetation, are worn into numberless little gullies, which expose a singularly bright red soil. From this cause, and from the low whitewashed houses with tile roofs, the view reminded me of St. Cruz in Tenerife. In a northwesterly direction there are some fine glimpses of the Andes. ... I did not cease from wonder at finding each succeeding day as fine as the foregoing. What a difference does climate make in the enjoyment of life! (241-2).

In terms of content, the perspective from the deck, the descriptions of the landscapes and houses, the colours, and sense of 'exhilirati[on]' and 'enjoyment' are too striking to be coincidental.

Woolf's rewriting of Darwin's narrative is subversive in several ways. Darwin writes in the first person from the perspective of the authoritative subject observing the object (the landscape), whereas Woolf's narrator observes the observer, Rachel, using free indirect discourse, incorporating the human (and by implication Darwin) into the category of observable (animal) specimen. Furthermore, Woolf's descriptions are neither attributed to Rachel or the narrator, destabilising the locus of authority in this passage, and inviting the reader to do the work of choosing how to attribute these descriptions, or accept the openness of instability and decentred authority. Finally, there is a stark contrast between Darwin's apostrophising – 'What a difference does climate make in the enjoyment of life!' (242) – and the twisted syntax of Woolf's 'On her the effect was exhilarating; after the sea, the hot earth was exciting' (88). Darwin's sentence follows the logic of cause (climate) and effect (enjoyment). Woolf's syntax, conversely, disrupts this logic: the cause (the hot earth) literally comes 'after' the effect (excitement, exhilaration). Darwin's scientific plot – x causes y – is destabilised, interrogated. The use of passive construction in Woolf's line reinforces the suggestion that Rachel is acted on, as an objectified specimen perhaps, 'nearer the cow.' Trapped in such a Darwinian paradigm it is no wonder Rachel dies. Lambert, who reproduces both Darwin and Woolf's passages (15), points to the parallel content in these passages to demonstrate Woolf's engagement with Darwin's work, offering a narratological feminist reading of Woolf, whereas I unpack Woolf's revisions of Darwin's work at sentence level, considering perspective, syntax, and the animalisation of the viewer. My methodology here reveals the subtle subversive differences between the two passages that a broader narratological reading overlooks, revealing Woolf's beastly revisions.

Parallels between these two voyage narratives also occur in Woolf's and Darwin's descriptions of the South American jungles and their animal figurations. This is a passage from *The Voyage Out*:

> The trees and the undergrowth seemed to be strangling each other near the ground in a multitudinous wrestle; while here and there a splendid tree towered high above the swarm, shaking its thin green umbrellas lightly in the upper air. […] As they [Rachel and her suitor Terence] passed into the depths of the forest the light grew dimmer, and the noises of the ordinary world were replaced by those creaking and sighing sounds which suggest to the traveller in a forest that he is walking at the bottom of the sea. The path narrowed and turned; it was hedged in by dense creepers which knotted tree to tree, and burst here and there into star-shaped crimson blossoms (315).

And this is from Darwin's *Journal of Researches*:

> the forest was so impenetrable, that no one who has not beheld it, can imagine so entangled a mass of dying and dead trunks. I am sure that often, for more than ten minutes together, our feet never touched the ground, and we were frequently ten or fifteen feet above it, so that the seamen as a joke called out the soundings. At other times we crept one after another on our hands and knees, under the rotten trunks. In the lower part of the mountain, noble trees of the Winter's Bark, and a laurel like the sassafras with fragrant leaves, and others, the names of which I do not know, were matted together by a trailing bamboo or cane. Here we were more like fishes struggling in a net than any other animal (267).

Once again, Woolf's novel evidently carries Darwinian traces in the description of the forests and maritime analogies. Woolf's 'traveller' is not Rachel but a male character ('*he* is walking') perhaps an intertextual gesture towards Darwin, reminding us that natural history and travel were male-dominated pursuits (although there were women travel writers as well, these were usually not natural historians). Woolf both rewrites the male travel narrative with her female protagonist and reminds us that she is doing so by invoking this 'he.'

But what about Woolf's animal tropes? The traveller's sensation of 'walking at the bottom of the sea' gestures towards Darwin's struggling fish simile. The difference between Darwin and Woolf is in the figurative detail. Where Darwin's simile uses the connective 'like' to both compare and create a distinction between travellers and fish, Woolf's is more complex. Her passage not only enacts Darwin's traveller-fish simile, she focalises that simile through a character – the abstracted male traveller – who is himself a trope. Woolf draws our attention to figure-making itself, breaking open Darwin's simile by rendering the mind in which it is formed explicitly figurative. Furthermore, the traveller on the seabed invokes another Darwinian trope, taking us back to Rachel's death 'curled up at the bottom of the sea' (*VO* 397). The male scientist traveller is interpolated in the *alogon* (Derrida 2011 320-1) primordial animal trope of the mollusc.[10] Agamben's 'caesura between the human and the animal' (16) – Darwin's separation of traveller and fish via simile – collapses in Woolf's slippery figuration, disrupting the anthropological machine that separates humanity from animality. Thus, Woolf turns Darwin's marine figure against (implicitly male) evolutionary logic, travellers, and narrators that imply progress. She disrupts teleological narratives through devolution, pronoun play, and figuration which slips between traveller trope, fish simile, and primordial shell metaphor. (I will discuss shell troping in the following chapter). This is an early example of Woolf's feminist, disruptive and evolving animal 'tropological transformations' (de Man 241). *The Voyage Out* not only 'draws directly' on Darwin's

[10] See Setz on late modernist primordial aesthetics in Expressionism, Dadaism, and Surrealism.

Journal of Researches (Beer 1996 13, 14), but subverts key passages in significant beastly, tropological ways.

Beer, who analyses these passages, points to Woolf's alertness 'to [her] own intertextuality here,' in the lead up to Rachel's death, which she calls Woolf's 'challenge to the developmental narrative' implicit in evolutionary theory (16). Beer's invaluable narratological readings of Darwin's evolutionary plot focuses on prehistory and Woolf's disruption of the marriage plot as evolutionary plot. My reading builds on this argument, pushing it further by showing how Woolf contests these plots on the level of animal trope, shattering and refiguring the boundaries between human and animal which Darwin had radically destabilised. I also build on Davison's animal studies reading of Darwin in Woolf. Davison observes that Woolf's 'zoological' first novel features over six-hundred 'insistently intrusive' animal references (13-14). She argues that Woolf decentres the dominant human gaze by depicting human characters as specimens engaged in comic Darwinian courtship rituals and reminding us of our animal origins (13-14). Davison, then, begins the analysis of the Darwinian animal that I develop in this thesis. She draws attention to the figurative nature of these animals, for, '[w]hether figuring as conventional similes, startling metaphors, memories, real presences, or objects of trade, animals roam with often disarming ease throughout the pages of the novel, conjuring up a vision of the civilized world as a raucous menagerie' (Davison 13). But these animal figurations do far more than that; I will show that they reveal Woolf's complex interrogations of *logos*, the anthropological machine, and the feminist, racialised and eugenicist politics of animals in western discourse. Beer, Lambert, and Davison, then, have shown that Woolf engaged extensively with Darwin's work in her first novel. Their scholarship (except Davison's) predates contemporary animal studies. My approach, offering tropological readings of Woolf's animal figures informed by the contemporary animal studies approaches outlined above, both builds on Beer's

narratological, Lambert's feminist and Davison's beastly work and offers new insights into the complexities and politics of Woolf's animal figuration.

Section 1.5 Further Darwin, Woolf, and Animal Scholarship

1.5.1 Darwinian Woolf Scholarship

Woolf's first and last novels, *The Voyage Out* and *Between the Acts*, are the works which, as Beer puts it, 'engage most directly with ideas of the primeval' (1996 9) which is probably why they are often read as her most Darwinian novels. I will briefly consider the Darwinian aspects of *Between the Acts* before outlining wider Woolf scholarship on Darwinism in her works. Set shortly before World War Two, the novel is concerned with 'the prehistory to the coming war' and the 'unwilled resurgence of the primeval' (Beer 1996 18): rain, animals (cows, fish, swallows), and Lucy Swithin's preoccupation with 'mammoths, mastodons, prehistoric birds' and '[p]rehistoric man' (*BA* 196-7). References to evolution and the primeval occur throughout the text: Giles kicks 'a pre-historic' stone (*BA* 89), Swithin is like 'a dinosaur or a very diminutive mammoth. Extinct she must be' (156), while a 'great lady' is 'nearly extinct' (84). The novel closes with the resurgence of the primeval: 'dwellers in caves had watched from some high place among rocks. The curtain rose. They spoke.' (197). Woolf's last novel evidently offers Darwinian 'kinship between past and present forms, the long pathways of descent, the lateral ties between humankind and other animals, the constancy of the primeval' (Beer 1996 27). Furthermore, Sam See calls the novel a feminist 'post-Darwinian comedy' which celebrates a 'Darwinian understanding of nature as infinitely heterogeneous and transformative' (643), while Almas Khan observes that the novel 'alludes to' *On the Origin of Species* and 'evokes' the *Descent of Man* (115). Finally, Peter Adkins argues that 'the non-anthropocentric aesthetics of *Between the Acts* are structured through a relation to extinction' (286), a topic I discuss in chapter five. He is one

of numerous scholars to offer ecological readings of the novel and Woolf's wider works.[11] Rather than revisiting her first and last novels, this thesis will analyse Darwinian animal tropes in her works between these acts, work which has been previously overlooked by scholars despite their rich Darwinian intertextuality.

There are several essays and chapters on Woolf and Darwin which consider her other novels, but no lengthy work (including Beer's) reading the two writers together except Kreutziger's unpublished thesis on her early texts. Vicki Tromanhauser observes that Septimus Warren Smith, in *Mrs. Dalloway*, is 'an avid reader of Darwin,' who envisions 'eons of evolution' (2012 189). For Woolf, she points out, 'Darwin's evolutionary theory provided the conceptual apparatus for thinking "scientifically" about the natural continuum of life' (2012 189). Manya Lempert considers the 'aesthetic, Darwinian understanding' of classical tragedy in *To the Lighthouse* and *The Waves* (449), and Caroline Pollentier demonstrates that Darwin's *Journal of Researches* is a source for Woolf's essays 'The Docks of London' (1931), 'Oxford Street Tide' (1932), 'Street Haunting' (1927), and *Flush: A Biography*, which engage in what she terms 'transspecies flânerie' (156). As Westling puts it, '[b]rought up among Darwinian free-thinkers, [Woolf] pondered the human/animal dance in much of her writing, from her earliest stories and novels to her last' (2006 34). These critics consider individual examples, rather than 'much of her writing,' and most do not consider specific representations of Woolf's animals. Only Goldman, who works on Woolf's signifying dogs (discussed in chapters three and four); Benjamin Bagocius, who reads Woolf's moths as Darwinian queer tropes; and Davison, consider the politics of Woolf's Darwinian animal tropes. Jeanne Dubino, as I discuss in chapter three, considers Darwinian *themes* (evolution, survival of the fittest) in *Flush: A Biography*, whereas I analyse canine *tropes* in that text. As Westling observes, no one has 'exhausted the subject' of Darwin in

[11] Ecological readings include: Adkins, Alt 2010, Cantrell, Dickinson, Howell 2017, Tazudeen, Scott, See, Tromanhauser 2009, Westling 1999 and 2006, Saguaro, Scott, and Sultzbach (Adkins 286).

Woolf 'in any sense because his thought so permeates Woolf's view of the world, her epistemology, and her narrative explorations of experience' (2006 35). While I do not intend to exhaust the subject, my thesis will address this gap, offering the most comprehensive account of this topic yet. Scholarship on Woolf and Darwin, then, has primarily focussed on feminism and prehistory in her first and last novels and established a precedent for my research into Woolf's engagement with Darwin in her other works.

1.5.2 Modernist Animals

Scholars such as Margot Norris and Peter Childs (2000) have noted Darwin's influence on modernism more broadly, particularly on writers such as H. G. Wells, Franz Kafka, and Joseph Conrad. According to Jonathan Greenberg, 'Darwin makes possible modernism itself' by challenging Victorian assumptions of creationism, anthropocentrism, essentialism, physicalism, and teleology (432). Indeed, Darwin's *Descent of Man*, as Hovanec explains, 'examined animal subjectivity in the service of describing humans' lineage, but it did not reduce animals to a mere metaphor for the primitive parts of human nature' (9). Rather, Darwin argued that 'animals do not differ in kind, although immensely in degree,' which 'does not justify us placing man in a distinct kingdom' (*Descent* 173). While Darwin's work recognises faculties in animals typically ascribed to humans (see chapter three), this cannot be dismissed as 'erroneous' anthropomorphism; rather, as Eileen Crist argues, such work reflects a 'perception of subjectivity in the animal world' and a recognition 'that living is experientially meaningful for animals and that their actions are authored' (12). Indeed, Frans de Waal has warned against 'anthropodenial,' 'the a priori rejection of shared characteristics between humans and animals when in fact they may exist' (258). Modernist literature, then, came in the wake of what Sigmund Freud called the three 'severe blows' dealt to 'the universal narcissism of men' (Freud 141, 143) by Copernicus' heliocentrism (decentring earth from the universe), Darwinism (revealing our kinship with animals), and Freud himself

(who showed that unconscious drives shape 'rational' behaviour), as Beer (1983 9) and Hovanec (7) point out. The second blow raised questions about how we think and write the (sometimes human) animal.

Modernist writers were attuned to the question of the literary animal and knew from Darwinism that humans descended from animals, 'that animals have some phenomenological experience,' and that humans had caused species extinctions (Hovanec 27). Indeed, Ryan observes that 'there is something specific to early twentieth-century modernity' that 'finds writers probing the boundaries between humans and other species' (2019 321). These writers often 'attend[ed] to the tensions between literal and figurative language in order to unsettle the binary designations' of the human and animal (Ryan 2019 322). Furthermore, where modernist textual animals often act as figures for human concerns, 'they do not stop signifying themselves' and 'are not arbitrary symbols' (Hovanec 27). As such, modernist writers not only recognised 'the proximity of the human and non-human life' and analysed the 'discursive prejudices behind representations of these lives,' they also 'model[led] new agencies that reimagine the ontological and ethical relations between human and non-human' (Ryan 2019 322). Woolf herself knew biologist Julian Huxley, evolutionary scientist J. B. S. Haldane, and philosopher Bertrand Russell, who were 'deeply invested in the question of how to represent animal subjectivity, and whose forays into animal worlds shaped their understanding of science and literature' (Hovanec 162, 3). Woolf and her contemporaries 'can be understood as responding to the same two questions: how should we understand animal life after Darwin? And, how can we capture animals in words that are true to life?' whilst recognising that any possible answers are 'speculative, provisional' (Hovanec 4-5, 3). The challenge, which Darwin made possible, to both 'understand animals as subjects' and know that 'one cannot know animals' subjective experience – drove Woolf and her contemporaries to the very limits of literary scientific representation' (Hovanec 3) and tropological figuration.

Research on modernism and animal studies (which usually recognises Darwin as influencing modernism) is rich, recent, and began in earnest with Carrie Rohman's *Stalking the Subject* (2009) and Kari Weil's *Thinking Animals* (2012). Rohman treats Darwin's and Woolf's work separately, discussing how Darwin's 'discourse of species' (13) destabilises notions of human subjectivity and observing that British modernist literature 'is marked by a certain crisis in the human vis-à-vis the animal' (21), and Weil notes that Woolf's Flush has the canine moral qualities Darwin outlines in the *Descent of Man* (88). More recently, Hovanec considers *Animal Subjects* (2018) in British literary modernism in a post-Darwin context, arguing that 'nonhuman perspectives' were 'a source of aesthetic novelty and pleasure' for Woolf (178). Setz explores the *Primordial Modernism* (2019) of James Joyce, Gottfried Benn, and others, but not Woolf, and Rachel Murray's *The Modernist Exoskeleton* (2020) considers 'the ongoing reverberations of Darwinian theory in early twentieth-century British society' (5) evident in modernist insect imagery. Edward Howell (2017) and Peter Adkins' (2019; monograph forthcoming) theses also consider modernism and the Anthropocene, and Darwinian allusions to extinction in the works of H. G. Wells, James Joyce, Djuna Barnes, E. M. Forster, and Woolf. Forthcoming edited volumes exploring modernism and animals include Hovanec's and Murray's *Reading Modernism in the Sixth Extinction*, Alberto Godioli's and Carmen van den Berg's *Crossing Borders: Transnational Modernism Beyond the Human*, and Alex Goody's and my own *Beastly Modernisms: The Figure of the Animal in Modernist Literature and Culture*. My research builds on the valuable work of these scholars, offering a sustained investigation of Woolf's engagement, through her animal tropes, with Darwin's works and tropes.

1.5.3 Woolf-specific Animal Scholarship

Woolf wrote about animals throughout her life and her first essay written for publication, 'On a Faithful Friend' (1905), was an obituary for the Stephens' mongrel Shag in the

Guardian. Woolf's childhood was 'full' of 'animals, real and imaginary' (Lee 111). Her mother Julia wrote and read the children animal stories (Lee 111), and her father drew animal pictures in his books and made paper animals (*E*5 586). As a child, Woolf often went to the zoo (*HPGN* 43 Lee 111), hunted insects with her brother Thoby, and established a family 'Entomological Society' (*MB* 116) which displayed specimens in the 'family Museum' (*L*1 2), as Alt observes (2010 31). Woolf had animal pet names for herself, such as 'Goat' (*L*1 40, 65, 77) and 'Sparroy' (*L*1 70, 85, 110), and even the plural bestiary 'Apes' (*L*1 377, 408, 466). She also gave her correspondents creaturely names, calling her sister Vanessa Bell 'Billy,' 'Ape,' and 'Dolphin,' for example, her husband Leonard 'Mandril' or 'Marmoset' (Lee 111), and her friends 'reptile,' 'toad,' and 'beast' (*L*1 39, 26, 180).[12] This excess and pluralisation of Woolf's letter writing personae suggests that her animal signifiers are always already unstable, slippery, multiple and, as we shall see throughout this thesis, multivalent.

There are several recent monographs which specifically consider Woolf and animals. None have taken Darwin as their primary concern. Bonnie Kime Scott's *Virginia Woolf and Modernist Uses of Nature* (2012) observes that *Between the Acts* features 'Darwinian theory,' but focuses primarily on how Woolf's animals 'anticipate feminist scientific and environmental criticism' (62). Derek Ryan's *Virginia Woolf and the Materiality of Theory* (2013) offers a new materialist Deleuzian reading of her creatures, only mentioning Darwin in passing (40). Christina Alt's *Virginia Woolf and the Study of Nature* (2006) gives the most in-depth account of Woolf's engagement with Victorian natural historians and her biologist contemporaries. Indeed, critics have considered Woolf's engagement with scientific developments including the new physics and astronomy (Beer 1996, Whitworth, Henry), geology (Hollis), and biological eugenics (Childs 2001, Bradshaw 2003 and Peach 2012). Alt observes that 'Woolf's appreciation for the immense shift in thought that Darwin's work

[12] These are sample page numbers as examples occur too frequently to list comprehensively.

brought about is evident in both her life and her writing' (2010 107). She argues that Woolf both 'rejected the Victorian interpretation of evolution as an assurance of "development as improvement"' (2010 4) and rejected the patriarchal 'biases that informed evolutionary arguments' (2016 255). I discuss Jane Goldman's *Virginia Woolf and the Signifying Dog* (forthcoming) in chapter three. Thus, while there has been valuable scholarship on Woolf and animals, and on Woolf and Darwin, there remains a gap, which my thesis addresses, in this scholarship: no sustained study of Woolf's engagement with Darwin, let alone through the lens of animal studies, has ever been done.

I focus on Woolf, rather than her contemporaries, or indeed her antecedents who engaged with Darwinism, like George Eliot (as Beer (1983) does), for several reasons. Animal tropes frequently gesture towards women, racialised, and classed others, as we shall see, and are intimately connected to questions of feminism, empire, and eugenics. Woolf is prominent, though not exceptional, among modernists in her engagement with these questions, most obviously in her feminist polemic *A Room of One's Own* (1929) and her pacifist, anti-fascist *Three Guineas* (1938), both written during the height of (and challenging) the British empire and the rise of fascism and eugenics in Europe. These works both swarm with animal imagery and reveal the patriarchal, imperialist impulses which produce misogynist, fascist, and eugenicist societies that animalise marginalised humans. We often forget that eugenics was popular across the European political spectrum (and in feminist movements) long before the 1930s and treat the Third Reich as an aberration. The term eugenics, however, was coined in Victorian England by Darwin's cousin Francis Galton (discussed in chapter four). Concerns about human pedigree and breeding emerged in the context of Darwinism and anxieties around human animality. Woolf's animal tropes are textual hotspots which invoke these concerns, and which expose the discursive uses of animals as synonyms for marginalised people in Western discourse. Unlike her contemporaries, Woolf led the charge against Victorian and 1930s patriarchal, imperialist,

and escalating eugenicist discourse, through her feminist, (anti)imperialist, and anti-fascist Darwinian animal tropes.

Section 1.6 Conclusion

1.6.1 Chapter Summaries

The structure of this thesis, rather than being chronological, shifts across these feminist, imperialist, and eugenicist themes. I begin, in chapter two, by discussing Woolf's engagement with Leslie Stephen's Victorian attitudes towards Darwinism, and then move on, in chapters three and four, to her direct engagement with Darwin's the *Descent of Man* and dog tropes in both Victorian and 1930s eugenicist discourse. These three chapters consider the (proto)eugenicist politics of biography as a literary form concerned with the pedigree and evolution of the eminent individual. In chapter five, I consider how the discourse of the *Descent of Man* shaped Woolf's early feminist essay, 'The Plumage Bill' (1920), on the feather fashion trade and feather tropes, before closing with a chapter on regenerative worm tropes in *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas*, through the lens of Darwin's first and final works: his *Journal of Researches* and *The Formation of Vegetable Mould Through the Action of Worms* (1881). My selection of Darwin's works spans his oeuvre, paying closest attention to his *Descent of Man*, which has been overlooked by Woolf scholarship. My constellation of Woolf's works focuses primarily on her often fictive biographical work and her feminist polemics because these creative critical forms disrupt genre (etymologically related to gender, genus, and genealogy) in particularly Darwinian ways, and challenge imperialist, racist, misogynist, and eugenicist animal tropes, as we shall see. The key form I will investigate, however, operates at sentence level: the trope.

In chapter two, "Why is life beastly?': Darwin, Stephen, and Woolf's Auto/Biographies,' I explore how Leslie Stephen significantly shaped the genre of biography, the man of genius trope, and consider his suggestion that the generative power

of Darwinian (figurative) language is unsafe in the hands of women writers. This chapter argues that Woolf challenges Stephen's form of biography, his pedigree man of genius trope, and reclaims Darwinian language for women in four ways – on the levels of genre, subject matter, metaphor, and animal trope – in her auto/biographical work. In doing so, she celebrates illegitimacy and animality, while carving out a new mongrel form of auto/biography concerned with 'The Lives of the Obscure' (*E*4 118): women, servants, and animals. What is at stake here is not just the form and subject matter of biography, but the very structure of tropes, metaphors, and so of Western discourse that enabled the marginalisation of the obscure in favour of eminent men in the first place.

In chapter three, '(R)evolutionary Dogs: Significant Otherness in *The Descent of Man* and *Flush: A Biography*,' I consider the representation of what Haraway calls 'significant otherness' (2003 28) in Darwin and Woolf's canine stories. I offer insight into Woolf's engagement, in her life of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's spaniel, *Flush: A Biography*, with the feminist and beastly stakes of Darwin's writing on dogs in the *Descent of Man*. The latter makes the radical claim that 'there is no fundamental difference between man and the higher mammals in their mental faculties' (86), and that 'animals do not differ in kind, although immensely in degree' (173). Drawing on the work of Haraway, Derrida and Agamben, I argue that the *Descent of Man* – specifically Darwin's work on canine ethics, language, reason, and imagination – was an unacknowledged intertext for *Flush: A Biography*. This is the first critical analysis of Woolf's fictional biography by way of Darwin's dogs. I suggest that *Flush: A Biography* pushes beyond Darwin's use of canine anecdotes as scientific discourse and teaches us to pay attention to canine significant otherness through her dog tropes. Chapter four, 'Canine Tropes, Eugenics, and Ethics,' argues that we must also read *Flush: A Biography* with Darwin's attitudes towards eugenics, outlined in the *Descent of Man*, in mind. I consider how Woolf's earliest manuscript draft of *Flush: A Biography* (1931-32) explores the politics of race, class, and significant, otherness

in the context of 1800s and 1930s eugenicist discourse, and 'related discourses of tyranny' (Snaith 633) through canine troping. What is at stake here, as Haraway puts it, is 'who and what gets to count as an actor' in a posthuman, post-Darwin world (2003 27).

Chapter five, 'Darwin and Woolf Write Feather Fashions, Sex and Extinction,' considers feather fashions, which were the subject of heated debate between the 1860s and 1920s, with anti-plumage trade campaigners blaming feather-wearing women for the extinction of exotic bird species. Woolf's early feminist essay, 'The Plumage Bill' (1920), was concerned with the ban of imported plumes and challenged the 'injustice to women' (*E*3 243) implicit in the language of the plumage trade debate. I demonstrate that three contexts, all overlooked by extant Woolf scholarship on the essay, underpinned the discourse of the plumage trade debate: British colonialism; Darwin's thinking on extinction; and his writing on women's feather fashions and sexual selection, all evident in the *Descent of Man*. I show that Woolf engaged with these three contexts, and the related trope of the monstrous feathered woman, in proto-posthumanism and imperialist ways, in her essay. I also demonstrate how Woolf twists the Darwinian feathered woman trope in her later works to posthuman, post-Darwinian, feminist advantage. In chapter six, 'The (R)evolutionary Politic Worm,' I consider the Darwinian trope of the worm. In *The Formation of Vegetable Mould through the Action of Worms*, Darwin called worms 'small agencies,' 'low in scale,' but of 'some interest' (2, 93). This chapter investigates the feminist, anti-fascist politics of worm imagery in Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas*, through the lens of Darwin's *Journal of Researches* and his work on worms. First, I argue that Woolf's striking description of woman as 'a worm winged like an eagle' (*AROO* 34) is intimately connected to Darwin's discussion of worms and women's intellect. Then I consider how Woolf's vermicular 'creature, Dictator' (*TG* 135) was shaped by Darwin's fascination with the 'extraordinary' (*Journal* 71) Argentinian dictator Juan Manuel de Rosas outlined in his *Journal of Researches*. Finally, I analyse Woolf's silkworm and mulberry tree imagery in

Three Guineas in connection with Darwin's work on silkworms and Third Reich sericulture discourse. I provide insight into Woolf's feminist, pacifist, and anti-fascist engagement with Darwin's works through regenerative worm tropes and reveal previously unexplored sources linking *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas* to each other and to Darwin's work.

My introduction has made a case for why we need to read Woolf's work through Darwin's. I have outlined their family connections, Woolf's reading and writing on Darwin, and I have given an overview of relevant scholarship on the subject. I aim to build on Beer's ground-breaking work and Davison's animal explorations to deliver the first extensive study of Woolf's engagement with Darwin, particularly the *Descent of Man,* across her works. Given that most of the extant scholarship on these two writers preceded the rise of animal studies, and that animals are central to Darwin and Woolf's work, I have also discussed the politics of animal troping, and the need for reading these two writers through the lens of animal studies. My thesis, then, has two aims: to demonstrate that Woolf's engagement with Darwin and Darwinism was far more extensive, sustained, and subversive than previously recognised, and to argue that, by reading these writers alongside each other, we can gain valuable insight into the entangled politics of their animal tropes, which has ramifications for approaches not only in Woolf studies and Darwin studies, but in animal studies more broadly.

Chapter Two

‘Why is life beastly?’

Darwin’s, Stephen’s, and Woolf’s Auto/Biographies

Section 2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 Genius and Obscurity

In her essay ‘The Art of Biography’ (1939), Woolf states that the subject matter of biography has typically been ‘the man of genius’ (*E*6 182). In this chapter, I explore how Woolf’s father Leslie Stephen significantly shaped the genre of biography and the trope of the man of genius, as founding editor of *The Dictionary of National Biography* (1885-1900, hereafter *DNB*), which was concerned with documenting the pedigree of eminent men including his friend Darwin. He also claimed, in his biography *George Eliot* (1902), that the generative power of Darwinian narratives, language, and metaphors of reproduction and descent, was unsafe in the hands of women writers and promoted ‘very bad morality’ (166). I will argue that Woolf subverts the pedigree man of genius trope, develops new (r)evolutionary forms of auto/biography in resistance to Stephen’s, and reclaims Darwinian (always already beastly) generative language for women through her experiments in auto/biographical writing. She does so in four ways – on the levels of genre, subject matter, metaphor, and animal trope – in her essays on biography, her biographical essays, her mock-biographical novels – *Orlando: A Biography* (1928) and *Flush: A Biography* (1933) – and her seemingly conventional biography, *Roger Fry: A Biography* (1940). In doing so, her beastly auto/biographical writing celebrates proliferations of meaning, illegitimacy, women, and animality, disrupting the very structure of figurative forms which enabled what she terms the ‘Lives of the Obscure’ (1924 *E*4 118) to be discursively marginalised by men like Stephen in the first place. I use the term auto/biography following Woolf scholars Laura

Marcus (1994 11) and Gill Lowe (1), to indicate the inseparability of these unstable genres. The term 'beastly' – meaning beast-like, 'unmanly' and 'cruel' (*OED Online*) – comes from Woolf's letter to her friend Violet Dickinson (29 [November 1904]), where she asks, 'Why is life "Beastly"?' (*L*1 160).

I will begin with a case study from Woof's (r)evolutionary auto/biographical 'A Sketch of the Past' (1939-1940), demonstrating how questions of auto/biography, proliferating meanings, and animal tropes are entangled in Woolf's writing. Then I will outline my theoretical framework, considering the Darwinian reproductive gender politics of figurative language by drawing on the work of scholars including Claire Colebrook, Jacques Derrida, and Srivinas Aravamudan. Then I will address Woolf's four revisionary auto/biographical methods. First, in section 2.2, I will consider Woolf's destabilisation of auto/biography at the level of genre in terms of form and subject matter, including her call for 'Lives of the Obscure' (1924). Second, in section 2.3, I will show how this call, and her auto/biographical writing on Stephen reacted against his biographical genealogies of eminent men and his views on women using Darwinian language. Third, in section 2.4, I will analyse Woolf's reproductive metaphors and animal tropes in 'George Eliot' (1919), 'A Talk about Memoirs' (1920), and *Orlando: A Biography*. (I will not discuss Woolf's animal life, *Flush: A Biography* (1933) until the following chapters.) I will show that Woolf's auto/biographies swarm with the unstable Darwinian metaphors implicitly forbidden her by Stephen, and multivalent animal tropes which gesture towards illegitimacy, elided mothers, and blurred species boundaries, disrupting Stephen's pedigree patrilinear genealogies and genius trope. Woolf's metaphors and tropes form tropological chains of signification (de Man 241) which undermine binary understandings of vehicle and tenor, and so she destabilises the very structures of figuration which enable the marginalisation of the obscure in favour of eminent men. If Woolf understood discourse as constituting the world, what is at stake here is the *reconstitution* of that world for, and with, obscure and illegitimate animals

and women. Finally, in section 2.5, I will suggest that her most traditional biographical work, *Roger Fry: A Biography*, is a mongrel text concerned with that 'queer animal, man' (*RF* 289). Overall, we shall see that Woolf carves out a new mongrel form of (r)evolutionary auto/biography concerned with the previously elided 'Lives of the Obscure' (*E*4 118): women, and animals, themselves often tropes.

It is worth giving a brief rationale for the texts, topics, and terms covered here. The chapters that follow focus on specific Woolf texts and tropes – dogs in *Flush: A Biography*, feathers in 'The Plumage Bill,' and worms in *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas.* This chapter, however, covers a constellation of auto/biographical texts and animal tropes. This selection, and my wide-ranging arguments, both fit the subject(s) of Darwinian proliferation and allows me to demonstrate the extensive array of Woolf's works which deal with questions of animality, gender, and legitimacy, through animal troping, before zoning in on more specific tropes and texts later. I limit my discussion of pedigree to women and animals here, but these issues are intertwined, as we shall see in the following chapters, with the wider racial, imperial, and eugenicist politics of her animal tropes. As such, this chapter lays groundwork, particularly in exploring Woolf's inheritance of Darwinism from Stephen, and how this shaped her animal tropes, for the rest of my thesis.

2.1.2 Sketching the Auto/biographical Past

This section considers Woolf's Darwinian narratives, depiction of Stephen, and animal tropes in her autobiographical 'A Sketch of the Past,' written from 18 April 1939 to 17 November 1940 and first published posthumously in *Moments of Being* (1972). In this text, Woolf explores post-Darwinian preoccupations with evolution, auto/biographical reproduction, and human animality by bringing together the trope of the man of genius (here Stephen himself) with animal figurations. On a narratological level, Woolf's 'A Sketch of the Past' involves what Gillian Beer calls Darwinian 'plots' of evolution – phylogeny

(species development), and ontogeny (individual development) – writing women into evolutionary narratives (1996 6). Woolf uses Darwinian language, observing that she '*descended* from a great many people' (emphasis added *MB* 73), and was 'born many thousands of years ago' with 'instincts already acquired by thousands of ancestresses in the past' (77). She therefore co-opts narratives of descent for women, foregrounding the matrilineal, and by association, claims memoir as a genre of female authority. Indeed, Woolf famously writes elsewhere that 'we think back through our mothers if we are women' (*AROO* 57). Woolf also describes herself as a 'creature' in her memoir, her body 'driven' to develop by the 'force of life' – a phrase which gestures towards the laws of natural selection – her limbs 'driven as a plant is driven up out of the earth, up until the stalk grows, the leaf grows, buds swell' (*MB* 88-9). This botanic simile troubles human/nonhuman boundaries and is also linguistically unstable; the swelling buds may refer equally to her breast buds and to the buds of the plant. This slippage therefore interpolates human female bodies into evolutionary narratives and into the 'work of art' that is 'the world' (*MB* 81). Woolf's sketch engages with the evolutionary plots of (botanic) phylogeny and ontogeny and re-inscribes both with feminist politics that blur the human and nonhuman.

But 'A Sketch of the Past' does more than rewrite Darwin's plots with a feminist twist. Her trope of the caged beast is a textual hotspot where her feminist, Darwinian, animal, and reproductive language intersect in her auto/biographical work in subversive ways. In his discussion of post-Darwinian literature, Mark Feldman observes that the 'Darwinian self was imagined in physical and architectural terms, as caging an animal presence – a vestige of its evolutionary history' and points out that 'reproduction' was 'often narrated in physical terms dependent on tropes of caging' (74). Given that 'the self was thought to be a cage,' he adds, 'reproduction was imagined as a sort of mutual caging' (74) of the animal within. We can see a striking example of this caging in Woolf's beastly Darwinian auto/biographical reproduction of Stephen, to whom she dedicates at least ten pages of 'A Sketch of the Past.'

Woolf points up the tension between the rational humanist 'man of genius' (*E*6 182) and his beastly behaviour in an auto/biographical scene depicting Stephen and her younger self as animals caged together.

Woolf writes of Stephen's 'frustrated desire to be a man of genius' and observes that those 'who had genius in the Victorian sense were […] different, another breed' (*MB* 121-122). She invokes the language of animal breeding to consider biographical pedigree in a beastly light, pointing towards Stephen's animal nature and origins. This 'breed' was 'invariably ill to live with,' and 'violent outbursts' were, she says sarcastically, 'a sign of [their] genius' (*MB* 121). When Woolf describes Stephen's hyperbolic displays of rage and despair, she says that the 'genius mood was on him' (*MB* 124). Her visceral depiction of this mood takes the form of the Darwinian caged animal trope:

> It was like being shut up in the same cage with a wild beast. Suppose I, at fifteen, was a nervous, gibbering, little monkey, always spitting or cracking a nut and shying the shells about, and mopping and mowing, and leaping into dark corners and then swinging in rapture across the cage, he was the pacing, dangerous, morose lion; a lion who was sulky and angry and injured; and suddenly ferocious, and then very humble, and then majestic; and then lying dusty and fly pestered in a corner of the cage (*MB* 128).

This passage is striking for several reasons. Most of the passage is one long sentence where punctuation, verbs, adverbs, adjectives, metaphors, and animals proliferate. Woolf takes figurative language to excess. Her punctuation, rather than caging her clauses, allows them to run on, to swing across the cage.

Meanings here are open and multivalent; if the cage, monkey, and lion are all part of the same trope of the caged animal, all vehicles in this metaphor, then we are not given the

tenors to go with Woolf's verbs, adverbs, nouns and so on. What, for instance, do the shells signify? Ideas, words, emotions? All of these and/or something else entirely? Is Stephen literally fly-pestered, or figuratively pestered by his own troubled genius, or by Woolf? If the latter, then she is figured as both a monkey and a fly in a proliferation of signifiers and pluralisation of multispecies subjectivity. Woolf's animal signifiers here, and across her works, are unstable, slippery, multiple, and multivalent. Her sentence is generative, excessive, her meanings far from caged. Stephen's fears regarding the uncontrollable proliferation of meaning when Darwinian language is used by women writers, which I will come to, are enacted in this scene. His unpredictable outbursts engender new animal narratives that gesture towards a range of issues including personal, private conflicts, questions of language and meaning, evolution, and patriarchal power.

Woolf's choice of animals in this passage is significant. She referred to herself and others frequently in her correspondence as animals, as we have seen, including addressing her sister Vanessa Bell as 'Ape' (Lee 111) and signing letters as 'the apes' (*L*1 377, 408, 466). Although apes are different from monkeys, Woolf evidently figured herself and her sister as (potentially caged) anthropoids for some time. Monkeys and apes had, by the time Woolf wrote 'A Sketch of the Past,' become synonymous with evolutionary theory, particularly with the animal ancestry of humans. In Darwin's day the notorious 'Gorilla Wars' saw scientists such as anatomist Richard Owen trying to disprove (in opposition to Darwinists like Thomas Henry Huxley) the similarity between human and ape brains (*Expression* 'Introduction' xiii-xvi). There were also numerous cartoons from Darwin's time onwards playing on the (often racist and racialized) human/ape association, with anti-abolitionist cartoons portraying Africans as gorillas (Browne 2001 500). Woolf was no doubt familiar with Darwin's claims of 'our descent from some ape-like animal' and his interest in 'our nearest allies, namely the monkeys in the Zoological Gardens' (*Expression* 220, 230). As a child, Woolf visited those Zoological Gardens in Regent's Park with Stephen, fed the

monkeys (Scott 52-53), and her sister Vanessa held a chimpanzee (*PA* 12). If her monkey invokes caged racialised others and evolutionary controversy, then the lion, national animal of England and symbol of the British empire (which was waning when Woolf wrote her memoir), gestures towards a metaphor of the British self (Yamamoto 81).[13] If Stephen is figured as the patriarchal lion of a waning British empire, then Woolf, in this passage, is figured as not only as a multispecies shifting signifier, but also as the literal and figurative monkeys (and, problematically, their racialized human counterparts) that were key to evolutionary theory and to disproving human exceptionalism. This passage highlights some of the key intersecting issues that Woolf's animal tropes invoke and which are central to this thesis: race and empire (which I discuss in the following chapters), along with patriarchy, generic boundaries, literal and figurative animals in Darwinian discourse, and the proliferation of meaning available (for revision) in animal tropes.

2.1.3 The Politics of Figurative Language

This chapter considers the politics of both metaphor and animal tropes. We have seen that the gender binary violently structures metaphor, and indeed all other oppositions, in Western discourse, and considered the relationship between the figurative and the literal. This violence is bound up in the asymmetrical, hierarchical structure of the binary where the vehicle (signifier, figurative) is subordinate to the tenor (signified, literal). Metaphor, which through use becomes trope, differs from simile, analogy, and other (contiguous) forms of figurative language in this binary sense. By re-signifying vehicles as tenors and producing proliferating chains of signification, however, Woolf creates a form of adjacency that disrupts the hierarchical, binary structure of metaphor and trope. We have seen too, that while Darwin saw metaphor as ineffectually describing reality, Woolf came to understand that there is 'some real thing behind appearances' which we make 'real by putting it into

[13] See Goldman on lions and Bonnie Prince Charlie (1998 154).

words' for 'we are the words; we are the music; we are the thing itself' (*MB* 81). If language constitutes the world, then Woolf's subversive Darwinian metaphors and animal tropes have the potential to turn Western discourse to feminist and animal advantage.

Let us revisit the distinctions between different forms of figurative language. Tropes (*tropos* means to turn), the 'paradigm of all figures,' are 'figures of *deviation*' in which 'the meaning of a word departs from its lexically codified usage' (original emphasis Ricoeur 162, 2). The trope 'consist[s] of one word' and 'occurs between two ideas, by a transfer from one to the other' (Ricoeur 63-64). According to Plato, Ricoeur explains, there are proper words with 'proper meaning' and 'metaphor and the other tropes are *improper* or figurative meanings' (emphasis added 51): they lack decorum. Metaphor (*metaphora* means to carry over), a common form of trope, is as Paul Ricoeur explains:

> classed among the single-word figures of speech and is defined as a trope of resemblance. As figure, metaphor constitutes a displacement and an extension of the meaning of words; its explanation is grounded in a theory of substitution (1).

This displacement involves the vehicle (or signifier) being subordinate to the tenor (signified). The 'dualism of metaphor is neither neutral nor innocent,' as Colebrook points out, 'for one term is seen as self-sufficient and real – the literal – while another term is secondary, dependent and inessential – the figure or image' (54).

Tropes and metaphors differ in their oppositional structure from other forms of figurative language: simile (meaning 'like') compares two *literal* things (A is like B), while synecdoche (meaning 'to take up together') and metonymy (meaning 'change of name'), operate by contiguity. That is, synecdoche is a device by which a part of the thing referred to stands in for the whole – such as a keel for a ship – and metonymy occurs when an attribute

or adjunct is substituted for the thing meant, such as 'the deep' for 'the sea' (Lodge 74). Allegory (meaning 'in another tongue') is also different from trope and metaphor (which are traditionally restricted to a single word) because allegory is more extensive in form and can involve imagery, fable, myth, and parable (Lodge 253). For Ricoeur, metaphor 'has only one true meaning, the figurative meaning' whereas allegory 'consists in a proposition with a double meaning, having a literal and a spiritual meaning together' (68). I am interested in the violent binary structure of tropes and metaphors as regards gender, race, class, and animality, and the relationship between 'devia[nt],' 'improper' figuration and the literal (Ricoeur 51, 162). I am also interested in how Woolf breaks open the notion of a single figurative meaning, a fixed signified, to create chains of signification.

Numerous feminist scholars, including Claire Colebrook, Marina Warner, and Hélène Cixous, have argued that the gender opposition principle is related to metaphors of reproduction. From 'the pre-Socratics and Plato' onwards, Colebrook tells us, 'the concept of gender has been inextricably linked with questions regarding the generation or genesis of the universe' (1). As Warner points out, 'the dominant, recurring metaphor for the disposition of the world in all its aspects is procreation' (70), since at least Hesiod's *Theogony* (c.700 BCE), and the Bible.[14] This tradition 'contrasts an active masculine creativity with a passive feminine receptivity' with women figured as 'bearers of children' and associated with the 'bodily,' 'against which male subjects define themselves' (Colebrook 3). As such, 'Western reason defines itself as other than any natural, physical or finite body, and in so doing devalues the process of natural and maternal birth' (Colebrook 7). Cixous agrees that 'woman is never far from "mother"' (1979 881) and the 'metaphorization' of childbirth (1990, 39). Maternal generation is therefore 'seen as dependent upon and expressive of an eternal and rational [male] order,' as we shall see with Darwinism and with biography, and utilised by 'the active and masculine fathering principle,

[14] See Warner on the female form as allegory which depends 'on the unlikelihood of women practising the concepts [such as liberty and justice] they represent' (xix-xx).

which gives life to the inert material and maternal body' (Colebrook 7, 5). Woman is both literally and figuratively a vehicle for the male and masculine.

At the root of metaphor (in conventional usage), then, is a view of the world deeply rooted in Western culture, that structures the literal according to an opposition of the formless and the structured, which are loaded with gendered associations (female and male respectively). Every conventional use of metaphor, then, alludes to this basic binary between a formless feminine principle and an ordered masculine principle. I argue that Stephen's patrilinear biographies use a basic opposition between (male) structure and (female) formlessness as the justification for a view of history which is androcentric, suggesting that men are needed to impose order on reality. Stephen does so through the textual reproduction of great men by a great man, eliding and disavowing the animalised female subject (or vehicle) who reproduces, births, these eminent subjects (or is indeed significant in her own right). Darwin is also complicit in reinforcing this binary by establishing a discourse in which he, as the rational male scientist and taxonomist, imposes the order of genealogy – reproduction can be defined as the 'perpetuation of a species' (*OED Online*) – on a 'personifi[ed],' formless, feminised 'Nature' (*Origin* 1861 85). Darwin writes famously, for example, that 'Man selects only for his own good; Nature only for that of the being which she tends' (*Origin* 65). We might even consider Darwin a biographer of species, for he says that 'Our classifications [of species] will come to be, as far as they can be so made, genealogies' (*Origin* 357). Metaphor can, however, also be a means of disrupting the binary principle that it usually relays, because it can create uncontrollable chains of association and signification whereby the boundary between the 'ordered' and the 'formless' is shattered. This possibility is present in Darwin's writing in the way his metaphors get away from him, and Woolf exploits a similar type of rogue metaphor to make endless associations between things such that no side of the binary is privileged. Such signifying chains constitute a world

in which the ordered/formless binary is disrupted, and with it the masculine power structure that it supports.

In contrast to the fantasy of male-only generation through genius (*gignere*, to beget) – the Frankenstein paradigm – Woolf's proliferating metaphors of generation and her animal tropes form a chain of signification that evokes what I call a *matrix* of obscure lives. I am invoking Judith Butler's phrase from *Gender Trouble* (1990), 'the presumed heterosexual matrix of desire' (72), by which cultural norms reinforce the hierarchical gender binary and compulsory heterosexuality (24). Matrices, however, bring us to the textual and the Darwinian animal, as well as the gendered and sexual. The term matrix is derived from the Latin *mater* (mother), and refers to 'the elements which make up an interconnecting network,' a 'womb, source, origin,' 'a female animal kept for breeding,' 'creating' 'a text, image,' and in printing, refers to the 'metal block in which a character is stamped or engraved so as to form a mould for casting a type' (*OED Online*). The womb, then, is animal, and a Darwinian origin point for species, character, and writing. The term matrix highlights the ways in which animals, women, the materiality of writing, and reproduction are connected in Western discourse, as they are in Stephen, Darwin, and Woolf's works, in different ways. If the 'man of genius' begets (his biographees) textually through *logos*, then birthing (whelping, foaling etc.) is the *alogon* female bodily reproduction of species, the 'caesura between the human and the animal' (Agamben 16) within human genealogy and the anthropological machine. What Agamben calls 'the passage from animal to man' (34-5) is discursively in some senses the birth canal. Indeed, Woolf writes (29 December 1910) that her sister Vanessa Bell's animality is evident after she gives birth: 'that old Bitch left off suckling her young and wrote […] Nessa has a chow hand – three words, with all the fur on them, take up a line' (*L*1 445). In patriarchy, as Jane Goldman puts it, this '"passage from animal to man" where or when an animal-not-yet-human births a human-animal, occurs every time a mother whelps a son' (Goldman 2018 167). Woolf's matrix, then, brings

together beastly women writers, Darwinian language, and matrilineal genealogies when challenging Stephen's understanding of biography, eminent men, and Darwinian language as the domain of those men.

Darwin's 'metaphorical expressions' (*Origin* 1861 85), such as natural selection, sexual selection, and the fight of/for survival, were concerned with the reproduction of species through natural laws. Metaphors of reproduction and inheritance then, were central to Darwin's theory of evolution, which is concerned with:

> Growth with *reproduction*; *Inheritance which is almost implied by reproduction*; Variability from the indirect and direct action of the conditions of life, and from use and disuse; a Ratio of Increase so high as to lead to a Struggle for Life [due to limited resources], and as a consequence to Natural Selection, entailing Divergence of Character and the Extinction of less improved forms (emphasis added *Origin* 360).

Indeed, narratives and metaphors of reproduction radically changed in the wake of this theory. Mark Feldman explains that in 'an evolutionary age,' reproduction 'was more terrifying and uncertain than before, as it now entailed contemplating vast reaches of evolutionary time' (73). 'Inheritance,' a central concern of biography, no longer referred only to patrilinear 'succession to property, a title, office' and 'estate' (*OED Online*), but to perpetually reproduced animal ancestry. According to recapitulation theory, popular in the nineteenth century, the 'Darwinian self,' was 'thought to contain a record of its own evolutionary history, preserving animal vestiges at the very centre of the human' (Feldman 73). Thus, 'desire and reproduction, fundamental for all organisms, put the human subject in contact with his or her primitive, deep history' and 'animal origins' (Feldman 75, 80).

If metaphors of reproduction invoked genealogies with animal origins after Darwin, animal tropes too, had new layers of signification pointing towards those origins, and the potential to turn genealogies, generating an 'infinite chain of tropological transformations' (de Man 241). The increased 'variety of animal tropes' that Feldman observes in post-Darwinian writing, including 'the return of animality' (79), indicated 'evolutionary anxieties' (85) about reproduction which were, I suggest, gendered. The 'unincorporated and unincorporable remainder' between signifier and signified, however, allows metaphors and tropes to be 'reappropriated by resistant positions' (Aravamudan 5), such as Woolf's, by '*re*-signifying' them (original emphasis, Goldman 2007 52) in new tropological chains of signification. Woolf, in her auto/biographies, resists the gender opposition principle by re-signifying metaphors of reproduction and proliferation into such chains, disrupting hierarchical figurative binaries, and turning them to (r)evolutionary feminist, beastly advantage through her animal tropes.

It is worth pausing here to explain the stakes, for Aravamudan and de Man, of paying attention to tropes. For de Man, writing in the post-structuralist paradigm, the tropological chain has limitless potential meaning, 'tropes are neither true nor false and are both at once' (242). Tropes operate in an 'endless play of substitution and amalgamation' (244) not 'located in history' but in 'linguistic structure' (70-71). For Aravamudan, conversely, specific tropes call for postcolonial analysis because they *are* historically situated and can tell us about linguistic and material structural racism through 'attitudinal shift[s]' in 'collective memory' (2). He reads racist colonial tropes 'with the hope of *some advantage*' whereby such analysis can 'lead us to a fuller, more accurate and more responsible account' of history (original emphasis 3). While de Man's 'infinite chain of tropological transformations' (241) is useful to my understanding of the multivalency of tropes, I align my argument more closely with Aravamudan's, considering the implications of tropes (and the gap between signifier and signified) for animals, women and, in later chapters, people of

colour and the working classes. As Haraway puts it, I am concerned with the 'material-semiotic,' the 'implosion of trope and flesh' (2007 383) regarding 'relationally entangled' animals and marginalised humans (330).

Section 2.2 Genre, Subject Matter, Metaphor

2.2.1 Woolf's Auto/Biography

I will now consider Woolf's understanding of biography in terms of genre, subject matter, and metaphors of reproduction and proliferation, in relation to the gender politics of Stephen's biographical works. Proliferation of words and their meanings, signified and perpetuated by (always already beastly) reproductive metaphors and tropes, is key to Woolf's understanding of auto/biography. Woolf discusses biography in several of her essays including 'The Lives of the Obscure' (1925), 'The New Biography' (1927), 'The Narrow Bridge of Art' (1927), 'Craftsmanship' (1937), and 'The Art of Biography (1939). In 'The Art of Biography' Woolf traces biography's origins to the eighteenth century, when Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), widely recognised as the first (fictive) biography, and James Boswell's ground-breaking *The Life of Samuel Johnson* (1791) were published. She outlines biography's boom in the nineteenth century, when it became 'fully grown and hugely prolific' and calls biography a 'young art' (*E*6 181). Woolf states, however, that while the 'novelist is free; the biographer is tied' (*E*6 181) by facts. She makes an appeal for the 'creative fact; the fertile fact; the fact that suggests and engenders' (*E*6 187). This creative, fertile fact destabilises the fact/fiction binary, and embraces generative proliferation and Darwinian reproduction metaphors, placing the animal (that reproduction metaphors evoke) at the centre of language and biography. For Woolf, '[w]ords do not live in dictionaries; they live in the mind' (*E*6 96), and as such, overturn the meanings assigned to them by dictionaries, such as Stephen's *DNB,* which I discuss below.

Victorian biographies, Woolf states, were concerned with 'the man of genius' (*E*6 182), such as Samuel Johnson, James Boswell, and John Gibson Lockhart, as well as 'Victorian worthies' (*E*4 474), whose flaws, she says, were 'covere[d] up' by their biographers (*E*6 182). For Woolf then:

> the question now inevitably asks itself, whether the lives of great men only should be recorded. Is not anyone who has lived a life, and left a record of that life, worthy of biography – the failures as well as the successes, the humble as well as the illustrious? (*E*6 186).

Instead of celebrating men of genius, Woolf turned to 'The Lives of the Obscure,' reaching 'across the waste of years to the rescue' of 'forgotten' (*E*4 119) women, but also animals. She was concerned with post-Darwinian subject matter and, as we shall see, Darwinian language and metaphors.

Woolf put her theory of maternal genealogy, that we 'think back through our mothers if we are women' (*AROO* 57), into practise in her biographical writing, although her female subjects were not always obscure. She published biographical sketches and reviews of famous women writers including Jane Austen (1920, 1922, 1923, 1929), George Eliot (1919, 1921, 1925), and philosopher Mary Wollstonecraft (1929).[15] She also wrote about her friends – such as composer Ethel Smyth (1921 *E*3 297-301) and classicist Janet Case (1937 *E*6 111-114) – her sister Vanessa Bell (1930 *E*5 137-142), and lesser-known women such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge's daughter Sara (1940 *E*6 249-255), Thomas Carlyle's wife Jane (1929 *E*5 10-28), and poet Laetitia Pilkington (1925 *E*4 127-131). I cannot do justice to this extensive body of work here which includes articles on at least seventy-five women. In *Flush: A Biography*, Woolf says that Elizabeth Barrett Browning's maid Lily Wilson's life 'is

[15] Austen (*E*3 268-271, 331-335, *E*4 146-157, *E*5 459-465), Eliot (*E*3 293-295, *E*4 170-181, 386-388), Wollstonecraft (*E*5 471-477).

extremely obscure and thus cries aloud for the services of a biographer' (*F* 109). Indeed, Woolf pointedly observes elsewhere 'that no lives of maids […] are to be found in the *Dictionary of National Biography*' (*TG* 235). These sketches of women blurred the boundaries of fact and fiction. Her 'Friendship's Gallery' (1907 *E*6 515-549) was a 'mock biography' of her friend Violet Dickinson, 'Memoirs of a Novelist' (1909 *CSF* 69-79) was 'the imaginary biography of an imaginary writer' by a fictive reviewer, and her study of entomologist 'Miss [Eleanor] Ormerod' (1924 *E*4 131-140) featured 'scenes described from imagination' and was 'yet another hybrid' (Briggs 2006 30, 32, 34). Woolf's biographies of famous and obscure women, then, embraced fertile facts.

Woolf also called for canine biographies. Writing of 'dogs in life,' she says a 'few famous names at once come to mind – Camp & Maida: Keeper; – Nero,' but laments that when 'we turn to the D.N.B.' we find, 'under the Ms,' the Scottish antiquarian James Maidment 'but not Maida' (*FMS*1 201). Carlyle's dog Nero, she adds, 'deserves a fuller discussion' (*F* 114). Women, servants, and dogs are lost to obscurity. Woolf, however, theorises obscurity in *Orlando: A Biography*, where 'obscurity is dark, ample, and free,' and invokes images of fertility and proliferation as Orlando thinks of people, 'their love-making and their child-bearing' (*O* 96, 97). This connection between obscurity, reproduction, and proliferation speaks to her claims in 'Lives of the Obscure' that 'obscurity [is] not empty but thick with the star dust of innumerable lives' (*E*4 121). Woolf's new biography then, stands in opposition to the Victorian tradition as she understands it, encouraging fertile figures and facts (and so disrupting old generic forms) and new subject matter: the obscure lives of women, servants, and animals.

In 'Craftsmanship,' Woolf embraces the potential that language holds for a proliferation of meanings, using reproductive metaphors. Words, Woolf writes, do not 'express one simple statement but a thousand possibilities,' for 'it is in the nature of words to mean many things […] they combine unconsciously together' (*E*6 92, 94). Her

understanding of language depends on metaphors of reproduction and proliferation; '[w]ords, English words' (97), she continues, 'have contracted so many famous marriages' (98), by:

> ranging hither and thither, by falling in love, and *mating* together. It is true that they are much less bound by ceremony and convention than we are. Royal words *mate* with commoners. English words marry French words, German words, Indian words, Negro words, if they have a fancy (emphasis added 96).

I discuss these 'Negro words' in chapter four, but it is worth observing now that Woolf reinscribes the racist discourse of miscegenation and of morganatics here, in her celebration of language's refusal to be contained by patriarchal class and race hierarchies. But my focus here is on animality. If reproductive metaphors place 'animal vestiges at the very centre of the human' (Feldman 73), then reproduction (or mating) as a metaphor for the proliferation of words and their meanings places the animal at the very centre of language. Woolf's reproductive metaphors also gesture towards Darwin's generative metaphor (lifted from Herbert Spencer) of Survival of the Fittest; she asks how we can 'combine old words in new orders so that they *survive*' (emphasis added *E*6 97). Her reproduction metaphors bear beastly traces in the term 'mating' and allusions to the 'survival' of animal species. The gender opposition principle, that 'contrasts an active masculine creativity with a passive feminine receptivity' (Colebrook 3) is disrupted by the proliferation and sheer excess of these reproductive metaphors, which, rather than reinforcing the binary, create a chain of signification that generates further layers, 'a thousand possibilities' (*E*6 92), of signification. As Woolf puts it, 'Words, English words, are full of echoes, of memories, of associations' (*E*6 95). Woolf metaphors of generation and generative metaphors reveal patterns within discourse that attempt to restrict words to fixed meanings (and people to patriarchy's fixed

racial, national or class categories) whilst also demonstrating the generative nature of language.

Section 2.3 Charles Darwin and Leslie Stephen

2.3.1 Stephen on Darwin

Before discussing Stephen's opinions, outlined in *George Eliot*, on generative Darwinian language in women's hands, it is worth placing Stephen's views in the context of his opinion of Darwin. Stephen enjoyed a friendship with Darwin from 1877 onwards, and held him in high regard, evidenced by his letters, lectures, and published works. On May 5, 1877, Stephen wrote in a letter of their first meeting: 'The *great* Darwin […] most kindly called upon me […] I was proud to welcome him, for of all *eminent* men that I have ever seen he is beyond comparison the most attractive to me' (emphasis added 1906 300). Days after the Darwin's death, Stephen described him in a letter (April 22 1882) as 'the noble old hero of science' (1906 346). Years later, in *A Family Chronicle* (October 9 1896), Stephen says he 'had a special reverence' for Darwin (1906 445). On November 11 1887, Stephen wrote to Darwin's son, Francis Darwin, who had edited and sent Stephen a copy of the *Life and Letters of Charles Darwin*: *Including an Autobiographical Chapter* (1880):

> I received your book a day or two ago, and bolted it whole. I think you have done it admirably. I need say nothing of the autobiography. Your own account of your father's life seemed to me – and I could not praise it more highly – to fit in perfectly with his own writing (1906 392).

Stephen here appears to be congratulating Francis Darwin on his ability to father (according to Colebrook's active male principle), as it were, his own father through writing. Thus, the patriarchal Darwin genealogy is perpetuated through auto/biography, eliding the mothers –

the caesura between animal and human – who birthed these eminent men. Francis Darwin and Stephen have generated (and perpetuated) a contract with the reader to forget the mothers in the Darwin genealogy, and accept the hierarchy of gender signification which recognises the male as active and creative, and the female as a subordinate, invisible vehicle. In another act of monumentalising his father, Francis Darwin also wrote the fourteen-page (most were much shorter) Charles Darwin entry in the *DNB* (Amigoni 2017 134).

Stephen was ordained in 1859 and famously lost his faith in 1862 after reading *On the Origin of Species*. In 'Darwinism and Divinity' (1872), he wrote of changing Christian attitudes towards Darwinism (from horror to acceptance), asking, '[w]hat possible difference can it make to me whether I am sprung from an ape or an angel?' (86) and concluding that 'the philosopher's reason' is 'none the worse' in either case (87). His essay argues that the 'fears entertained by the orthodox' regarding our kinship with animals are based on false assumptions that many faculties are unique to humans (90). He demonstrates that animals, particularly dogs as I discuss in the following chapter, have more complex faculties than previously recognised (90-96). Stephen also, in his Ford lecture series on eighteenth-century literature and society, calls Darwinism, 'the revelation of a new principle, transfusing the old conceptions' (1907b 196). Finally, a few years before his own death Stephen wrote (20 June 1901) that he '[t]akes [his] consolations,' not from God, but 'from Darwin' (1906 463). Darwin was evidently a major figure not only in Victorian intellectual life but in Stephen's life and writings.

2.3.2 Stephen and Biography

Stephen was the founding editor of the sixty-three volume *DNB* (1885-1900), which he co-edited with Sidney Lee. This project followed a British tradition of cataloguing great men, exemplified by Debrett's *Barony and Peerage* (established in 1769), and John Burke's *A Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Peerage and Baronetage, the Privy Council, and*

Knightage (Woolf owned a review copy of 1927 85th edition, King and Miletic-Vejzovic np). Stephen's *DNB* differed from such work by shifting focus from the aristocracy (though the volumes did include many aristocrats) to men of genius, or what Noel Annan calls the 'Intellectual Aristocracy' (304). While the *DNB* demonstrated a democratising, meritocratic impulse, it was still a catalogue of privileged British men, that was patriarchal and nationalist in its subject matter and form, as we shall see.

The *DNB* was produced during a period hailed as both the 'Age of the Novel' and the 'Age of Biography' (Atkinson 14). The long nineteenth century saw an increase in literacy, mass publication, serialised publications, and the middle-class reader (Stelzig 3), with biography popular enough to 'hold its own against fiction' (Atkinson 16). Stephen's *DNB* was not only 'the crowning achievement of Victorian biography' (Atkinson 12), it was perhaps one of the most significant sources to shape Woolf's understanding of biography as a male-dominated tradition focused on 'the man of genius' (*E*6 182). Woolf inherited much of Stephen's 'vast library' after his death in 1904 which included, as we have seen, Darwin's *Journal of Researches*, *Descent of Man*, *On the Origin of Species*, and probably the *Life and Letters of Charles Darwin* (Gillespie in King and Miletic-Vejzovic np).[16] According to Woolf scholar Diane Gillespie, Stephen:

> allowed [Woolf] to choose what she wanted to read from his collection, with the stipulation that she read everything twice and that she make up her own mind about what she read rather than rely on the opinions of others (in King and Miletic-Vejzovic np).

Woolf 'found biographies to be among the most interesting of the books,' Gillespie explains, and Woolf's 'diaries, letters, and published works,' indicate that she read and 'reread books

[16] Several of Stephen's first editions which were sold to individual bidders are not included in the Woolf's library catalogue (Gillespie in King and Miletic-Vejzovic np).

from her father's library throughout her life' (in King and Miletic-Vejzovic np). Woolf's own library included numerous autobiographies and biographies of both eminent men, including Reginald Snell's *Darwin* (1937), and famous women, such as writers Margaret Oliphant, Charlotte Brontë, and pacifist Vera Brittain, many of which Woolf bound herself (King and Miletic-Vejzovic np).[17]

It is worth considering the role of women in the *DNB* to better understand Woolf's call for auto/biographies of obscure women's lives. According to Elizabeth Baigent (editor of the revised *DNB* 1993-2003), all the original editors, editorial staff, sub-editors, and most of the 653 contributors were men, while forty-five contributors were women (2). Biography, for Stephen, was a genre that prioritised male subjects, editors, and writers above female ones. Indeed, women comprised three percent of the subjects in his *DNB*, and these were primarily 'glamorous female aristocrats, actresses, courtesans, musicians, society beauties, and eye-catching criminals' (Baigent et al 3). The 'national life' that the contributors and editors 'sought to epitomise in the *DNB* was male' (2). Stephen's *DNB* was evidently not representative of the national life of women and tended to ignore their contributions to society. He did not of course consider animals, as Woolf observed, at all. The ways in which women *were* represented is interesting in several respects. The chronology of each subject's entry often depended on the individual's sex. Topics such as 'marriage and family details came after the description of the death of the [male] subject,' whereas 'in women's articles marriage generally appeared in correct chronological sequence' (Baigent et al 4). The editors prioritised men's (active) public national lives and women's private lives as (passive)

[17] Life writing by and/or about women in the Woolf library: Margot Asquith's *Autobiography* (1937); James Edward Austen-Leigh's *Memoir of Jane Austen* (1926) and *Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1887); M. C. Bishop's *Memoir of Mrs. Urquhart* (1897); Laman Blanchard's *Life and Literary Remains of L. E. L.* [Letitia Elizabeth Landon] (1841); Vera Brittain's *Testament of Youth: An Autobiographical Study* (1933); Charlotte Brontë's *Life and Works of Charlotte Brontë and her Sisters* (1924); Elizabeth Carter's *Memoirs* (1807); Catherine II, Empress of Russia's *Memoirs* (1927); Louisa Devey's *Life of Rosina, Lady Lytton* (1887); John Evelyn's *Life of Margaret Godolphin* (1904); Elizabeth Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1865); William Godwin's *Memoirs of Mary Wollstonecraft* (1927); Sarah Lennox's *Life and Letters* (1901); Ethel Colburn Mayne's *Life and Letters of Anne Isabella, Lady Noel Byron* (1929); Rosalind Nash's *Life of Florence Nightingale* (1937); Margaret Oliphant's *Autobiography and Letters* (1899); Iris Origo's *Allegra* (1935); Edith Sitwell's *Autobiography* (1926); and Janet Penrose Ward Trevelyan's *Life of Mrs. Humphrey Ward* (1923).

mothers, as caesurae I argue, vehicles for bearing sons in the anthropological machine. In my feminist animal studies reading of Stephen then, mothers operate as Agamben's internal 'caesura between the human and the animal' (16).

The treatment of morality was also asymmetrically gendered. The *DNB* writers 'strove to reassure readers' of their female subjects' 'womanly virtues' (Baigent et al 4), while the assumption of male virtues (genius, national historical achievements) was implicit. Furthermore, 'the language used to describe women' used gendered descriptors (Baigent et al 4). The entry on nineteenth century explorer Mary Kingsley, for example, says that '[a]lthough of daring and masculine courage' Kingsley 'was full of womanly tenderness, sympathy, and modesty' (qtd in Baigent et al 4). It was women like these that Woolf called 'The Angel in the House' (after Coventry Patmore's 1854 poem) in her 1931 speech to the London and National Society for Women's Service, posthumously published in 1942 as 'Professions for Women' (*E*6 480). This angel, Woolf stated, was 'utterly unselfish,' 'sacrificed herself daily' in the Victorian home and would 'never let anybody guess that you have a mind of your own' (*E*6 480-481). For Woolf, '[k]illing the Angel in the House was part of the occupation of the woman writer' (*E*6 480), whereas for Stephen, such angels were the only women worth including in the *DNB*.

While many critics agree that Victorian biographers were 'obsess[ed]' with 'great men' (Atkinson 3), others argue that 'Stephen fought for the inclusion of numerous obscure and second-rate lives in the dictionary' (Laura Marcus 97, Atkinson 12). Indeed, in an essay on the *DNB* in *The Athenaeum* (13 Jan 1883), Stephen called for 'as many thousands of obscure names as possible' (Stephen 1883 54) and he stated elsewhere that 'every life … has its interest' (1893-4 172). The evidence suggests that if these were Stephen's aims, he failed in extending the role of 'obscure' to women, and certainly not to animals. Stephen claimed that the 'dictionary-writer cannot dilate; but he is bound so far as he can to make the facts tell their own story' (1907a 22), yet the chronology of these facts appears to be

gendered, and the facts themselves – when relating to women – are framed in moralising language. Stephen imposed a heteronormative model on men and women in *DNB* where marriage operates as a fixed marker of maturation, a model which Woolf's life-writing queers in *Orlando: A Biography* and *Flush: A Biography*, as we shall see. For Woolf, '[m]any of the old chapter headings – life at college, marriage, career – are shown to be very arbitrary and artificial distinctions' (*E*6 186), and she subverted and bestialised Stephen's gendered chronology in her own biographical writing.

2.3.3 Woolf's Philosopher at Home

Where the *DNB* focused on the public national life of men and the private lives of women, Woolf merged and destabilised the auto/biographical and the public/private spheres throughout her article 'Leslie Stephen, the Philosopher at Home: A Daughter's Memories' (1932), published in *The Times*. This centenary piece is both a biographical sketch of Stephen, and Woolf's autobiographical account of him, and so destabilises the genres of biography and autobiography. Indeed, numerous critics have observed that Woolf's short works are often difficult to categorise and blur generic boundaries. Her short prose pieces are variously called essays (*E*1-*E*6), auto/biography (Laura Marcus 11, Lowe 2011 1), scenes (McCracken 2021 187), and sketches (Bradshaw 2003 xvii, Bromley 4, Gualtieri 18, Morehead 19). Woolf's manuscripts include sketches, essays and novel drafts within the same notebooks suggesting 'an openness to generic hybridity in her works' (McCracken 2021 192), where 'the fictional, the metafictional, the historical or the autobiographical are woven together in total disregard of generic laws; allusion, quotation, and creation are intertwined' (Reynier 32). Her auto/biography of Stephen could generically be called any of the above, and so destabilises and undermines the monumental form of biography.

The phrase 'Philosopher at Home' brings together the private home life and public persona of Stephen, as does the content of the auto/biography. This was not unusual as many

of the *DNB* writers knew their subjects personally and included autobiographical elements in their entries (Baigent et al 4). Woolf's opening line – 'By the time that his children had grown up the great days of my father's life were over' (*E*5 585) – disrupts the linear chronology typical of *DNB* entries, beginning with the wane of Stephen's career. The use of the first-person pronoun 'my,' before the identifying 'father,' prioritises the autobiographical above the biographical facts which follow. Although Woolf names some of his major works, the *DNB* goes unmentioned (except in the *Times*' editorial header to her publication), and she primarily focuses on Stephen's approach to his daughters' education. This conspicuous omission raises questions about the relationship between Woolf's auto/biographical publication, women, and Stephen's *DNB*. The text also begins and ends with women figures, specifically mother and daughter, from Woolf's opening 'my' to the final paragraph where she quotes George Meredith, who called Stephen 'the one man to my knowledge worthy to have married your mother' (*E*5 589). This interpolation of Julia Stephen into the narrative about Woolf's father restores the elided mother to a male dominated genre, using the matrilinear to frame Stephen's life, and invoking the textual and reproductive matrices I outlined earlier. Rather than focusing on his textual reproductions of eminent men, Woolf shifts our focus to the always already animal reproduction of children, specifically daughters, disrupting his patrilinear genealogies with her own presence in the narrative. The word father (rather than eminent editor or philosopher) also implicates Stephen in the reproductive process that Feldman says puts one in touch with their animal origins. Thus, the male dominated (in the *DNB* at least) genre of biography is framed and dominated by mother and daughter, gestures towards the animal in its emphasis on family, uses non-linear chronology, destabilising the boundaries of private/public and auto/biography. Woolf carves out a (r)evolutionary new form of auto/biography concerned with questions of genre, gender, and animality.

Woolf's article on Stephen also provides insight – grounded in reproductive and gendered animal imagery – into the connection between her father and her approach to writing (the textual reproduction aspect of matrix) auto/biography. Stephen's life is portrayed not through a litany of his works and achievements but through scenes. Woolf recalls his 'curious power to impress a scene' (*E*5 586) and simultaneously demonstrates her own talent for doing so. She writes:

> He would twist a sheet of paper beneath a pair of scissors and out would drop an elephant, a stag, or a monkey, with trunks, horns, and tails elegantly and exactly formed. Or, taking a pencil, he would draw beast after beast – an art that he practised almost unconsciously as he read, so that the fly-leaves of his books swarm with owls and donkeys (*E*5 586).

Her decision to focus on Stephen (re)producing animals which swarm and proliferate does several things. First, it places the animal at the centre of scene-making, and so once again at the centre of biography, indeed animals are central to the biographical scene of the father-daughter bonding as Stephen entertains his children. Second, by writing about beastly scene-making at the site of a (patriarchal) writer reading, Woolf's animals trespass across the pages of *logos*. They are interpolated in the moment of scene-making, of reading, writing, and literature.

Third, Woolf shows the reproduction of animals by a man to be intimately connected to the art of biography. If a biographer reproduces or begets (and so raises the question of the animal origins of) their subject in their biography, in what Woolf termed a 'parti-coloured, hybrid, monstrous birth' (*E*4 474), then Stephen here manifests the 'active fathering principle' (Colebrook 5) that casts the male as God-like creator at the expense of the maternal. In fathering these beastly swarms, this entangled bank, however, *he* becomes

the caesura between human and the animal, complicating Agamben's anthropological machine. Finally, this ability to create scenes was crucial to Woolf's understanding of biography (and fiction, as I have shown elsewhere, McCracken 2021). In 'A Sketch of the Past,' Woolf wrote, 'I find scene-making is my natural way of marking the past' (*MB* 145). Woolf's idea of her father as a scene-making biographer appears to have shaped her own scene-making techniques in her auto/biographical writing, although the content of her scenes differs greatly from his, restoring the female and the animal to the genre, to scene-making, and revealing the beastliness underlying Stephen's work.

2.3.4 Stephen and George Eliot's Darwinian 'bad morality'

I will now consider Stephen's views on women writers using Darwinian metaphors of proliferation. Aristotle proposed three categories of language – logic, rhetoric, and the poetic – each with its 'own appropriate style,' with metaphor belonging primarily to the poetic (2000 np). He warned that metaphors 'must be fitting' to 'ordinary language' which 'means that they must fairly correspond to the thing signified: failing this, their inappropriateness will be conspicuous' (Aristotle 2000 np, Hawkes 9). He, and others including Horace, believed metaphor ought to be controlled, or risk 'serious imperfection' (Horace 1970 80). Metaphor, then, was considered dangerous when used outside the poetic category to which it belonged. Stephen lived in what historian Katheryn Hughes calls 'the age of decorum' (vi). We shall see that Stephen abides by a similar, Victorian principle of decorum, but in his case the 'fitting' domain of *Darwinian* metaphor is in the hands of male writers (both scientists and poets), rather than women authors. Woolf subverts the notions of 'appropriate' or 'decorous' Darwinian metaphor exemplified by her father's views. According to David Lodge 'the major modernist novelists such as Joyce, Lawrence and Virginia Woolf,' demonstrated 'an abundance of metaphor' (xi). Lodge identifies various metaphorical modes (Joyce 'aspired to the condition of myth' while Woolf 'aspired to the condition of lyrical

poetry') but finds a modernist 'tendency' to a metaphoric 'representation of experience' which 'Woolf exemplifies': the 'texture of [her] writing becomes more and more densely embroidered with metaphor' (217). Metaphor allowed Woolf 'not so much [to] imitate experience as question it' (Lodge 217): to conspicuously test, I argue, the appropriateness and fit of Darwinian metaphor to her own subject matter and to women's writing.

Stephen's *George Eliot* (1902) was, ironically given that she could only get her work published under a male pseudonym, written for John Morley's English Men of Letters biography series. The series aimed to bring a 'wide readership the fruits of "high" culture' (Kijinski 205) and the first series (1878-1892) featured thirty-nine biographies of eminent men.[18] The second series (begun in 1902) included biographies of Elizabeth Gaskell, George Eliot, Fanny Burney, and Maria Edgeworth. Stephen contributed his inaugural biography on Samuel Johnson, and biographies of Alexander Pope, Jonathan Swift, George Eliot, and Thomas Hobbes. Like Stephen, Samuel Johnson disliked metaphors through which, he stated, the 'most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together' (Johnson 200). The series 'carefully guide[d] the general reader,' in an age of mass literacy and mass distribution of printed material, through several ideologically charged concerns, including:

> the cult of respectability […] the formation of a national identity; the relationship of literary values to features of gender; and […] the function of literary language as a repository of universal values (Kijinski 205-6).

[18] Stephen's *Samuel Johnson* (1878); James Cotter Morison's *Gibbon* (1878); Richard H. Hutton's *Sir Walter Scott* (1878); John Addington Symonds' *Shelley* (1878); Thomas Henry Huxley's *Hume* (1879); William Black's *Goldsmith* (1878); William Minto's *Daniel Defoe* (1879); John Campbell Shairp's *Robert Burns* (1879); R.W. Church's *Spenser* (1879); Anthony Trollope's *Thackeray* (1879); John Morley's *Burke* (1879); Mark Pattison's *Milton* (1879); Henry James' *Nathaniel Hawthorne* (1879); Edward Dowden's *Southey* (1879); Adolphus William Ward's *Chaucer* (1879); Goldwin Smith's *Cowper* (1880); James Anthony Froude's *Bunyan* (1879); John Nichol's *Byron* (1880); Thomas Fowler's *Locke* (1880); Stephen's *Alexander Pope* (1880); Alfred Ainger's *Charles Lamb* (1882); David Masson's *Quincey* (1881); Sidney Colvin *Landor* (1881); George Saintsbury's *Dryden* (1881); F.W.H. Myers' *Wordsworth* (1881); Richard Claverhouse Jebb's *Bentley* (1882); Stephen's *Swift* (1882); Adolphus William Ward's *Dickens* (1882); Edmund Gosse's *Gray* (1882); H.D. Traill's *Sterne* (1882); Morison's *Macaulay* (1882); Austin Dobson's *Fielding* (1883); Margaret Oliphant's *Sheridan* (1883); W.J. Courthope's *Addison* (1884); Church's *Bacon* (1884); Traill's *Coleridge* (1884); Addington Symonds' *Sir Philip Sidney* (1886); Sidney Colvin's *Keats* (1887); and Nichol's *Thomas Carlyle* (1892).

These values were gendered, not to mention racialised and classed. Like the virtuous women in the *DNB*, the series biographers judged female characters in their biographee's books by their womanly virtues, praising them for being 'pure and womanly,' and 'feminine all over' (Austin Dobson and Anthony Trollope respectively, qtd in Kijinski 220). These feminine virtues were also attributed to women biographees. Stephen says that Eliot is both in 'want of masculine fibre' (1902 155) and suitably focussed on her Victorian womanly virtues: her house 'became a temple of domestic worship, in which [her partner George Henry Lewes] was content to be the high priest of the presiding deity' (49). Stephen commends Eliot's domesticity, for, '[w]ith all her knowledge, she attended to the ordinary feminine duties. She was proud of her good housekeeping' (1902 197). This preoccupation with gender in the series, particularly *George Eliot*, is connected to the (ir)responsible use of Darwinian animal language.

Stephen's *George Eliot* expresses anxiety regarding women writers using Darwinian language. Indeed, since Stephen, scholars have discussed Eliot's engagement with Darwinism in her works (Beer 1983, Levine 1988, Amigoni 1995, Griffiths 2016). Darwin scholar David Amigoni 'traces an emergent perception amongst some nineteenth-century intellectuals that Darwin's *Origin* comprised not simply a methodology but a language which proliferated widely beyond the book cover' often 'varying as it moved' (1995 122). He examines 'the political anxieties provoked by the perception of proliferation' (1995 122) in *George Eliot*, as well as the biography's 'ideological resistance to a woman writer's use of "Darwinian' language"' (123). Descent, and by association reproduction, are major concerns in Eliot's long poem *The Spanish Gypsy*, and her novel *Daniel Deronda.* In the former, the protagonist Fedalma, raised as a Catholic Spaniard, discovers that her father is a gypsy and swears to found a gypsy nation with him in Africa. In the latter, Deronda discovers that he is Jewish by birth, and aims to establish a Jewish nation in the Promised Land. Both

characters hope to establish nations based on the discovery of previously unknown descent from marginalised groups.[19] Stephen, writing during a period when the demand for Irish Home Rule threatened the stability of the British Empire, says of Eliot:

> Her doctrine, stated in cold blood, seems to be that our principles are to be determined by the physical fact of ancestry. The discovery that my father was a Saxon or a Celt might be allowed to affect my sympathies, but surely should not change my views of home rule […] to throw overboard all other ties on the simple ground of descent, and adopt the most preposterous schemes of the vagabonds to whom you are related, seems to be very bad morality (1902 166).

Stephen rejects ethno-nationalism first and foremost, but he also rejects Eliot's use of Darwinian descent narrative, and the 'language of heredity,' which had 'transmuted and varied beyond the limits established by reason' (Amigoni 1995 144). Indeed, the physical facts of animal ancestry, as Feldman suggested, were a great threat to reason and morality. Stephen considered men of reason, Amigoni explains, to be the 'legitimate custodians of Darwin's language; women writers such as George Eliot were not to be entrusted with its resources' (1995 145). For with those resources, she celebrated ethno-nationalism over cultural nationalism, undermining the stability of the British empire. Indeed, as far as Stephen was concerned, Eliot's '"poetry" – does not appear to [him] to be poetry' at all (Stephen 1906 463), but 'bad morality' (1902 166).

We have seen, then, that Stephen played a significant role in shaping the English biographical tradition through the *DNB* and English Men of Letters series, and that these works treated men and women differently in terms of chronology, morality, and language. We have also seen that he revered Darwin and viewed Darwinian language as the domain of

[19] The connection between Stephen's discussion of these minority nations and Woolf's Society of Outsiders in *Three Guineas* calls for scholarly attention.

rational men, due to the danger of proliferation of (immoral) meaning in irresponsible (female) hands. *George Eliot* evidences Stephen's aversion to women writers using Darwinian language, metaphors of proliferation, and narratives of descent and reproduction. That Stephen felt comfortable using Darwinian language himself is evident in his Ford lecture series where he says that, 'every form of artistic production' may 'resemble the animal species which is, somehow or other, stamped out in the struggle for existence by a form more appropriate to the new order' (1904 9). One can only imagine his reaction had he discovered that Eliot was sceptical of 'Darwinian thinking in general' (Griffiths 208). She wrote to *The Times* (November 29 1859), '[w]e have been reading Darwin's book on the *Origin of Species* just now' and find it 'sadly wanting in illustrative facts—of which he has collected a vast number, but reserves them for a future book' (1978 227). Stephen's gendered attitudes towards Darwinian language are important points to consider given that his works were key resources for Woolf's own Darwinian, obscure, and beastly auto/biographies.

Section 2.4 Beastly Chains of Signification

2.4.1 Equine Power

I have argued that Stephen shaped the tradition of biography that Woolf engages with, that both Stephen and Woolf are concerned with Darwinian narratives, reproductive metaphors, and proliferation of generative language in biography, and that both biographers prioritise different subjects: eminent men of pedigree for Stephen; women, servants, and animals for Woolf. This section considers Woolf's animal tropes, particularly leopards and horses, and her proliferating chains of signification, which explode the hierarchical binary structure of conventional metaphorical and tropological usage. Woolf's view, in 'George Eliot' – published in the *Times Literary Supplement* (1919) on the centenary of Eliot's birth and in *The Common Reader: Series One* (1925) – differs significantly from Stephen's account.[20]

[20] I am not analysing her shorter 'George Eliot 1819-1880' (1921), as it tells a similar story, but without animal tropes.

Woolf points out that Eliot's 'critics, who have been, of course, mostly of the opposite sex, have resented' her lack of 'charm' (*E*4 172). Eliot observed this herself, as Woolf quotes, for she 'used to go about like an owl' 'to the great disgust of [Eliot's] brother' (*E*4 173).

Woolf also uses animal language to describe Eliot's 'long, heavy face with its expression of serious and sullen and almost equine power,' wearing a large hat with 'an immense ostrich feather' (171). But this beastliness is not pejorative, unlike the quote to which it alludes; Henry James' notorious recollection of his first encounter with Eliot:

> To begin with she is magnificently ugly – deliciously hideous. She has a low forehead, a dull grey eye, a vast pendulous nose, a huge mouth, full of uneven teeth and a chin and jaw-bone *qui n'en finessent pas*. Now in this vast ugliness resides a most powerful beauty which, in a very few minutes steals forth and charms the mind, so that you end as I ended, in falling in love with her. Yes behold me literally in love with this great horse-faced blue-stocking (James 116).

Eliot is, Woolf says, one of the 'great creative writers' (174) partly *because* her 'humour has shown itself broad enough to cover a wide range of fools and failures, mothers and children, *dogs* and flourishing midland fields, farmers, sagacious or fuddled over their ale, *horse*-dealers, inn-keepers, curates, and carpenters' (emphasis added 175). The 'power of her genius' (176) lies in her affinity with the obscure including the animal. Eliot taps into the 'ancient consciousness of woman' who, 'for so many ages dumb' – a silence which gestures towards the *alogon* animal – seems in Eliot's female characters, 'to have brimmed and overflowed and uttered a demand for something – they scarcely know what – for something that is perhaps incompatible with the facts of human existence' (178). We have seen that the facts of human existence are traditionally by, for, and about the 'man of genius' (*E*6 182). Woolf, conversely, celebrates Eliot's post-Darwin proliferating female consciousness. With

her beastly female ancestresses, it is no surprise that Eliot 'would not renounce her inheritance' as a woman (*E*4 178). This multispecies inheritance is part of 'her greatness. That greatness is here we can have no doubt' (*E*4 176).

The trope of the horse, in Eliot's 'almost equine power' (*E*4 171), is an unstable one here. Woolf exploits the gap, the 'unincorporated and unincorporable remainder' (Aravamudan 5), between signifier and signified, by building an 'infinite chain of tropological transformations' (de Man 241), which allows the trope to be 'reappropriated by resistant positions' (Aravamudan 5), here a beastly, equine, feminist position. Woolf's horse trope gestures towards the thoroughbred (more on this below) through the reference to horse dealers. The horse image also invokes the 'two most important manifestations of the horse' trope in Victorian literature; 'the war horse' and 'the labouring horse' (Oritz Robles 29). For Mario Oritz Robles 'the definition of political power (might), and social responsibility (right) are at stake in the historical development of these two literary tropes' (29). If Eliot is being figured as thoroughbred, then this reinforces her pedigree and the legitimacy of her genius. She may simultaneously, however, be figured as a labouring horse, often cast as a donkey in antiquity (41). In the Aesopian tradition (as in Apuleius's *The Golden Ass* and Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*), the donkey has high aspirations, but 'carries the moral burden of a category mistake: the donkey ought to realize that a lowly equid is only fit to work' (42). Eliot, too, 'ought' not to write as she does, for high Darwinian language in the hands of a lowly equine woman, is 'bad morality' (Stephen 1902 166). The successful woman writer is a category mistake, raising questions regarding who has the 'right' (Oritz Robles 29), to write and to use Darwinian language. Woolf celebrates this mistake as 'genius' (*E*4 176).

On the other hand, the *war* horse invokes the 'Trojan mare' (in whose belly the Greek soldiers hide), which according to Oritz Robles, is a symbol of deception as an essential aspect of the art of warfare (30). The horse, then, plays 'two complementary roles in antiquity: it is an instrument of war and a symbol of human ingenuity and imagination' (32).

Woolf may be figuring Eliot, then, as the Trojan horse, the mare who through her deception worked her way into the heart (and hearts) of the English men of letters and British literary culture. As such Eliot's trickery invokes her might (as a warrior), her illegitimacy (she is not what she claims to be), and her capacity for textual (rather than genetic – there is no foal in the belly of the Trojan mare) reproduction. The Trojan horse is not a gift but a means for smuggling weapons and armies (in this case women's literature perhaps) behind enemy lines. Woolf's equestrian trope is slippery because it does not specify what kind of trope (or horse) it is, instead opening a signifying chain of associations: thoroughbred, war horse, labourer. This enables her to cast Eliot as both a legitimate thoroughbred genius and a literary warrior infiltrating male-dominated literary circles, exploiting the 'remainder' between signifier and signified for feminist purposes.

2.4.2 Equestrian Reproduction

'George Eliot' is not Woolf's sole exploration of the horse as an auto/biographical trope. I will now consider the role of genre and pedigree – adding the thoroughbred to Oritz Robles' key warhorse and labouring horse tropes – in Woolf's 'A Talk About Memoirs' (1920). This text explicitly rejects genealogical trees and pedigree, suggests slippages between human and animal, and embraces Darwinian narratives and beastly metaphors of reproduction in ways that destabilise the genre. Woolf's 'A Talk about Memoirs' was published in the *New Statesman* as a review of Ethel Peel's *Recollections of Lady Georgiana Peel*; J. A. Bridge's *Victorian Recollections*; C. L. Hawkins Dempster's *The Manner of My Time*; Dorothea Conyers's *Sporting Reminiscences*; and *John Porter of Kingsclere: An Autobiography*. Woolf's review is something of a mongrel text. It takes the form of a dialogue between two fictional characters, Judith, who is embroidering a cushion, and Ann, who is reading aloud memoir excerpts. Ann calls Victorian memoirs 'great swollen books' (*E*3 181), and tells Judith:

> I had a vision last night of a widow with a taper setting fire to a basketful of memoirs – half a million words – two volumes – stout – blue – with a crest – genealogical trees – family portraits – all complete. "Art be damned" I cried (181).

We are invited to witness the destruction of the patriarchal line in the death and erasure of the widow's husband who goes unmentioned, and in the burning of these (presumably his) monumental books, likely written mostly by and about great men. In her refusal to die with her husband, the widow destroys genealogy, pedigree portraits, and volumes documenting the lives of great men. The dialogue, too, emerges as a new form of auto/biography from the ashes of Victorian life writing.

The burning volumes, like those displayed at the Darwin Centenary exhibition, boast human pedigree through their crests and genealogical trees, suggesting that life writing is a form of pedigree documentation. Woolf reveals the absurdity of documenting such lineage, when Ann reads that Lady Georgiana Peel was 'descended from Thor, the God of Thunder' (*E*3 181). She observes that 'there's not much about Lady Georgiana' (182) in the book. Even when life writing focuses on women they are elided. Ann skims through the texts, which are 'a little empty,' looking for 'Life' rather than 'long pedigree' (182). It is only when they reach the books on thoroughbred horses that things begin to 'hum a little' (183). Woolf blurs the distinction between human and equestrian pedigree in her critique of life writing; Ann and Judith feel that sports biographer Dorothea Conyers needs to 'have her fetlocks fired' (184). The narrative jumps between discussions of human characters – John Porter and Sir Joseph Hawley – and horses: Isonomy, Ormonde, and Madame Eglantine. Ormonde is called a 'great and noble creature' and 'magnanimous her[o]' and 'Sir Joseph Hawley – not a racehorse but the owner of racehorses' – Woolf draws attention to her

deliberate slippages – is hailed ‘a noble friend’ (184), akin to Stephen’s notion of Darwin as ‘the noble old hero of science’ (1906 346). Here her horses are as noble as men like Darwin, while those men are aligned with animals.

Woolf pokes fun at those who revere pedigree in both humans and horses, and implies that life writing (she uses memoir here, but her point seems applicable to auto/biography too) is the epitome of pedigree documentation, using metaphors of reproduction to do so. Ann, for example, talks about the life of racehorse trainer John Porter, who felt that ‘the whole world exists’ for ‘the amelioration of the thoroughbred’ (*E*3 184), the pedigree racehorse. Porter ‘praises his horses’ for ‘begetting fine children at the stud,’ while the stud’s ‘achievements as a sire strengthened [Porter’s] regard for him’ (184). The species of the characters are not always clarified as such. To the unfamiliar reader Madame Eglantine might be read as a titled human, rather than a race filly, who ‘delivered of her children’ (a human term, rather than foals) ‘under a tree in the park’ (160). Porter’s explicit praise of the mare who (re)produces thoroughbreds gestures towards the unacknowledged mothers who give birth to eminent men, and who receive less biographical attention than racehorses. If horses birth ‘children’ (160, 184), then the implication is that either women do the opposite, and birth foals (making eminent men beastly), that humans and animals are unstable categories, or that women are (or are treated like) breeding mares, as vehicles for bearing the offspring of men and contributing to such men’s ‘achievements’ and ‘regard’ (184) for one another. In each case, women function as the caesura between animal and human. This species ambiguity exposes the similarities between narratives of breeding pedigree animals, and the preoccupation of memoirists (and auto/biographers perhaps) with human genealogy and pedigree, as well as invoking the animality of the elided reproducing human woman.

The dialogue ends with Judith asking Ann to tell her about the poisoning of Porter’s horse Ormonde, whose life and death appears to be of at least equal interest to her as that of

Porter himself. The name Ormonde gestures towards James Ormonde (c.1418–1497), the illegitimate son of the 6th Earl of Ormonde and Princess Margret of Thormond. Woolf disrupts narratives of pedigree by alluding to bastards passing as legitimate thoroughbreds. This is perhaps one of Woolf's first signs of interest in animal biography (besides her obituary of her dog Shag mentioned in chapters one and three), and the slippery relationships between memoirs, family pedigree, descent, genealogy, reproduction, and human and nonhuman characters. This blurring of species and generic categories, and Woolf's attention to the intertwined discourses of human and animal breeding, with all its eugenicist implications (discussed in chapter four) speaks to my wider thesis, which considers the gender, imperial, racial, and eugenicist politics of her Darwinian animal tropes.

2.4.3 Orlando: A Bastard

We saw in the previous chapter that Woolf wrote about her memories of the 'great [Darwin] men' (*CH* 6) and their 'Darwin currency' (*E*4 291). She would have known, too, that the exhibition at the Cambridge 1909 Darwin Centenary Celebrations evidenced the family pedigree with portraits of seven generations of Darwins, the Wedgwood patent of arms, and a *Pedigree of the Family of Darwin*, featuring the Darwin coat of arms (Shipley np). The Darwins were not included in Burke's *Peerage* – they were doctors not aristocrats – and this *Pedigree* suggested a preoccupation with the family's status and genealogy. The *Pedigree* featured the Darwins' heraldic griffin and their family motto *Cave et Aude* (beware and dare). This motto was briefly changed to *e conchis omnia* (everything from shells) by Darwin's proto-evolutionist grandfather Erasmus Darwin. He had the new motto inscribed on his bookplates and carriage doors but reverted to the original phrase after canon Thomas Seward accused him of heresy (Carroll np). This temporary intervention offers a proto-evolutionary, multispecies genealogy of the Darwin pedigree. These shells not only reinforce any Darwinian reading of Rachel Vinrace's devolutionary death, as a shell in *The Voyage*

Out (as we saw in chapter one), they have implications (as does animal heraldry) for how we read Woof's *Orlando: A Biography*. This fictional biography queers the genre and revels in disrupting human pedigree, through illegitimate ancestresses, heraldic leopards with proliferating chains of signification, and bastardisation. Woolf's 'new hybrid form: the fictional biography,' as Gill Lowe explains, 'indirectly and playfully address the same issues raised explicitly in her non-fiction discussions' (1). In *Orlando: A Biography*, Woolf 'tells a playful version' of her lover Vita Sackville-West's life-story, 're-writes the history of the Sackville-West family,' and 'reimagines the genre of biography' in doing so (*O* Raitt and Blyth 'Introduction' xxxvii). Orlando's ancestral home, like Sackville-West's Knole estate, is full of heraldic leopards (*O* 332 n14:16). Indeed, Sackville-West's poem, 'Leopards at Knole' (1921), described 'Leopards everywhere,' 'their jewelled colour burns / In the window-pane' (1934 143). These rampant leopards – leopards in heraldry are usually *passant* (walking) – formed part of the Sackville-West patent of nobility (*O* 379 n78:18).

In the opening lines, Orlando's pedigree is established through heraldic leopard imagery which gestures towards the Sackville-West leopards:

> His fathers had been noble since they had been at all. They came out of the northern mists wearing coronets on their heads. Were not the bars of darkness in the room, and the yellow pools which chequered the floor, made by the sun falling through the stained glass of a vast coat of arms in the window? Orlando stood now in the midst of the yellow body of an heraldic leopard. When he put his hand on the window-sill to push the window open, it was instantly coloured red, blue, and yellow like a butterfly's wing. Thus, those who like symbols, and have a turn for the deciphering of them, might observe that though the shapely legs, the handsome body, and the well-set shoulders were all of them decorated with various tints of heraldic light, Orlando's face, as he threw the window open,

> was lit solely by the sun itself. […] Happy the mother who bears, happier still the life of a biographer who records the life of such a one! (14).

This narrator invites us to 'deciphe[r]' the 'symbols' in this passage (14). Doing so takes us back through the heraldic symbol to medieval bestiaries and Orlando's illegitimacy.

There is a long tradition featuring the 'partnering of man and signifying animal within the discourse of heraldry,' as Dorothy Yamamoto explains, where 'the nobility were related totemically to the natural world, especially to animals' (75). The heraldic sign operated 'as a signifier in a restricted code' of nobility, was 'transmitted to its bearer's descendants,' and 'was thus a sign of the continuance of one's family (and of its privileged status)' (78). The medieval 'insistence that legitimacy is located in the material sign,' however, indicated 'a gap where the signified essence ought to be,' that is, in the nobility themselves (79). This gap recalls Aravamudan's 'unincorporated and unincorporable remainder' between signifier and signified (5), ripe for tropological turning. Heraldic animals emerged from the pages of fantastical medieval bestiaries (catalogues of animal images loaded with Christian symbolism), and carried the hierarchical associations outlined in these bestiaries (81). According to the *Oxford Guide to Heraldry*, '[I]f those being granted or assuming arms paid any attention to the supposed symbolism' of heraldic animals 'some charges would never have been used' (Robinson and Woodcock 62). Their example is the heraldic leopard 'borne of an adulterous union between a lioness and a pard' (a fictional big cat) and 'incapable of reproducing itself' (Robinson and Woodcock 63, 203). The term leopard is commonly used in English and French heraldry to describe a lion *passant guardant* (on all fours, body in profile, head turned to the viewer), such as those on the English coat of arms (203). The lion 'signifies bravery, ferocity, might, gentility, and liberality' (63). This lion *passant guardant* is distinct from the spotted leopard standing *rampant* (on its hind legs, face in profile) on the Sackville-West's coat of arms which is

spotted and lacks these leonine associations. One can only speculate as to why the Sackville-West's had a symbol of illegitimacy as one of their heraldic animals, but this has been the case since the 1500s, and Woolf may well have known the meaning of this symbol. The heraldic symbolism of both Sackville-West and Orlando's leopards therefore undercuts the very legitimacy of their privileged literal and fictional family lines, slipping adultery and bastardisation into the gap between (not so) noble signifier and (ig)noble personage.

What then, are we to make of Orlando's face 'lit solely by the sun itself'? Perhaps his character is illuminated by our efforts to decipher his heraldry. The light also suggests that he is only partially caged (and cages invoke the post-Darwinian subject) by the 'dark bars' of the stained glass, that he may escape the symbolic order of heraldry. There is also a lexical shift from the medieval heraldic symbol and all it invokes, to the associations of the simile 'like a butterfly's wing' (14), which gestures towards Woolf's entomological knowledge and Darwin's natural history. Woolf's invitation to decipher this passage self-reflexively points up the figurative nature of both the symbolic leopard and butterfly simile, suggesting a mutual caging of the animal through language and the human through animal figures. This passage, then, invokes the post-Darwinian cage metaphor, gestures towards Orlando's illegitimacy, and by association the illegitimacy of the nobility. The passage also troubles the gap between signifier and signified, and so points up the illegitimacy, what Derrida calls the asinanity (*betise*), of animals as figures and tropes, in a long chain of tropological signification.

Mothers and matrices are central to Woolf's exploration of illegitimacy and proliferation in *Orlando: A Biography*. How are we to read, 'Happy the mother who bears […] such a one!' (14)? Is she happy in her adultery or (ironically) happy in her role as vehicle bearing the male tenor? Woolf keeps both options in play. The text proliferates with fecund figures. The 'same fertility' as in 'nature' showed itself in the 'life of the average woman [which] was a succession of childbirths' (209). The 'undistinguishable fecundity of

the garden' (210), as Suzanne Raitt and Ian Blyth point out, speaks to Darwin's claim that there 'is no exception to the rule that every organic being naturally increases at so high a rate, that if not destroyed, the earth would soon be covered in the progeny of a single pair'(*Origin* 52; *O* 456 n210:25). This increase in *Orlando: A Biography* is marked by illegitimacy. Orlando's life among the gipsies, and her three disinherited 'illegitimate' sons 'by Pepita, a Spanish dancer' (*O* 232), invokes Sackville-West's own Spanish gypsy heritage, to which she was 'very attached' (*O* 408 n130:4). Indeed, Sackville-West 'fantasised repeatedly about living among the gipsies in Spain' writing to her husband Harold Nicholson '[t]his is the life for me: gipsies, dancing' (*O* 408-9 n130:4). Her grandfather Lord Lionel Sackville had five children with one Pepita (daughter of Spanish gypsy Catalina Ortega). They never married and their children, including Vita Sackville-West's mother, were deemed legally illegitimate and when their sons tried to claim Knole in a 1910 court case. Sackville-West's mother, however, had married her cousin Lionel Edward Sackville-West, the legitimate heir, and so secured Knole. She was better off as a bastard married to the heir than as a woman who would never have inherited otherwise (see Goldman 2018 27-28, *O* 403 n123:10, 474 n232:22). Woolf's heraldic leopard, then, points towards the (literal and fictive) bastards who are disinherited in order to maintain the pedigree of the aristocratic line, and the fecund illegitimate mothers in the margins who bear (il)legitimate sons.[21] Her leopard trope is a satirical evocation of the delusions of heraldry and the realities of illegitimate aristocracy.

Orlando, having transformed halfway through the narrative into a woman, thinks about being buried in the family chapel:

[21] Indeed, Woolf's own niece Angelica Bell – Duncan Grant and Vanessa Bell's illegitimate daughter raised as Clive Bell's child – posed for a photo in *Orlando: A Biography*.

> Though she could hardly fancy it, the body of the heraldic leopard would be making yellow pools on the floor the day they lowered her to lie among her ancestors. She, who believed in no immortality, could not help feeling that her soul would come and go forever with the reds on the panels and the greens on the sofa. For the room – she had strolled into the Ambassador's bedroom – shone like a shell that has lain at the bottom of the sea for centuries and has been crusted over and painted a million tints by the water; it was rose and yellow, green and sand-coloured. It was frail as a shell, as iridescent, and as empty (*O* 289).

Here Orlando's description of the shell recalls Rachel Vinrace's devolutionary death in *The Voyage Out* (1915), where she 'might have been a shell' (*VO* 229), 'curled up at the bottom of the sea' (397). It also, probably unintentionally, recalls Erasmus Darwin's motto. Devolution to a primordial form is, as I argued in the previous chapter, a mode of rejecting the (un)natural law of marriage (a law Woolf undercuts here with her emphasis on illegitimacy) and reversing the evolutionary plot of progression. The simile of the ancestral home as a primordial form, an 'empty' shell, coloured like the heraldic leopard in rose and yellow, suggests another devolution, another rejection, of marriage as a form of legitimising aristocratic patriarchal lineage.

This passage is a key textual hotspot for considering Woolf's beastly use of figuration. The shell-like room simile is unstable and breaks open in with the excess of possible meaning, multiple 'unincorporated and unincorporable remainder[s]' (Aravamudan 5), in the gap between signifier and signified. The simile is not attributed to Orlando or the narrator, and Woolf's free indirect discourse leaves the source of this figuration ambiguous, unfixed. Although the shell is the vehicle to the tenor of the room, both operate as vehicles for further signification, as metaphors within and exceeding the simile. The shell is a multivalent Woolfian Darwinian trope, as we have seen, which bursts open the simile by

gesturing towards an excess of possible interpretations, including and beyond devolutionary narratives of marriage and illegitimacy. The shell *also* evokes Sandro Boticelli's erotic depiction – 'painted a million tints' – of Aphrodite standing on a giant 'rose' (*O* 289) shell in The Birth of Venus (1485-1486). This pre-Christian goddess brings us back to Woolf's claim that 'we think back through our mothers if we are women' (*AROO* 57), just as the evolutionary invites us to think back through our species.

Yet the shell and room are both 'empty' even though Orlando's soul will 'come and go forever with the reds on the panels and the greens on the sofa' (*O* 289). There is a tension, then, between the empty vehicles (shell, room), and multiplicity of tenors which could fill them. These tenors, however, are already vehicles themselves in increasing chains of signification, pointing to the maternal, mythic, and evolutionary genealogical past, and to the future, to 'forever' (*O* 289). This future might hold subsequent ambassadors, succeeding generations of Orlando's family (and by association Vita Sackville-West's), generations of the human species, and inevitably includes Orlando's mortality as she lies 'with her ancestors' (*O* 289). Orlando too, as a mother, is a vehicle for this future, for bearing sons to inherit the ambassador's room and the rest of her estate. The shell and room then are loaded with complex layers of figuration. They are both vehicle and tenor, metaphors of metaphoricity, tropes about the act of figuring (or 'paint[ing]') tropes. These tropes draw attention to the unincorporable remainder between signifier and signified – maternal and evolutionary genealogies, mortality, figuration itself – in chains of tenors-as-vehicles which signify to the point of excess, breaking open the asymmetrical structure of tropes. The 'empt[iness'] holds everything that cannot be incorporated into Woolf's simile. This passage therefore supports one of the key claims of my thesis: that Woolf's works swarm with Darwinian figurative animals which operate as signifiers overloaded 'to the point of Benjaminian allegorical ruin' (Goldman 2010 180), often acting simultaneously as vehicle and tenor.

In sum, then, *Orlando: A Biography* undercuts narratives of ancestral nobility by revealing, through the figure of the heraldic leopard and the Darwinian sea shell, the illegitimacy of such status, and of heraldry itself, which uses animal figures to signify the presence of nobility in persons who lack the legitimacy they claim. It is no coincidence that Orlando's husband is called Shelmerdine, or as she calls him, 'Shel' (300). Furthermore, Woolf reveals the illegitimacy, the asinanity (or as Derrida would have it, *betise*) of using animal figures and tropes as signifiers of human qualities and explores the 'unincorporated and unincorporable remainder' (Aravamudan 5) between signifier and signified in another 'infinite chain of tropological transformations' (de Man 241).

Section 2.5 'this queer animal man'

2.5.1 Woolf's Eminent Man

Woolf wrote one full-length biography of an eminent man, her friend the art critic, Roger Fry. It is worth discussing *Roger Fry: A Biography* (1940), to see whether it confirms or flies in the face of what I have been saying about Woolf's attempts to reclaim biography for obscure lives of women, servants, and animals. *Roger Fry: A Biography* has received little critical attention, with early scholarship dismissing the work as traditional. It uses conventional chronology and chapter titles (Reviron-Piégay 11, Rosenthal 214-5), emphasising fact, and operating 'within those biographical boundaries delineated by her literary fathers' (Cooley 81). Woolf herself found writing the book 'intolerable' (*MB* 94), 'drudgery' (*D*5 133), and a 'terrible grind' (*D*5 207), which may account for its lack of critical appeal. More recently, Diane Gillespie and Ruth Hoberman have suggested that the biography is more complex that it first appears.[22] I want to suggest that there was an ambivalent tension between the eminent man narrative in which Fry is complicit with elitist institutions, and Fry's rejection of institutions and fantasies of mixed ancestry. I will also

[22] For scholarship on this biography see: Broughton, Cooley, Gillespie (1994, 1996), Hoberman, Johnston, Quick, Reviron-Piégay, Rosenthal, and Smith (2016).

argue that Woolf's use of collage-like polyvocality destabilises the genre of biography, and her own authority, leading to a proliferation of (re)produced voices. This biography is a mongrel text that celebrates a man of pedigree.

Woolf was hesitant about taking on Fry's biography. In her letters, she wrote:

> Roger Fry's family have asked me to write a life of him: What am I to say? There are masses of private papers, letters, etc: I've refused to write a whole big life; but promised to read through the papers and see if I can do something lesser and slighter. But oh dear what a time it'll take – what difficulties there'll be (*L*5 352).

She wrote in her diary that, 'reading Roger I become haunted by him. […] The things I guessed are now revealed; & the actual voice gone' (*D*4 361). But although the actual voice was gone, the written voice persisted, and Woolf described *Roger Fry: A Biography* as 'an experiment in self-suppression; a gamble on Roger's power to transmit himself' (*L*4 417). The text opens and proliferates with Fry's own words – extensive quotations from his private papers – strung together by Woolf's writing. As Hoberman puts it, 'Fry's letters are linked (or, more accurately, insistently not linked) sometimes only by recurring metaphors, sometimes by blatantly awkward transitions that emphasize […] fragmentation and temporal discontinuity' (1987 185). The authority of the biographer is undermined from the first word, Fry's autobiographical pronoun 'I,' from a 'fragment' (*RF* 11) of his autobiographical sketches. This 'I' simultaneously alludes to Fry and the narrating I, Woolf, troubling generic boundaries and biographer authority. The process of reproducing Fry's voice results in layers of Fry's writing which 'suppress' Woolf's own voice, undermining her authority as biographer. The chimeric figure of Fry-Woolf becomes an experimental portrayal of what Fry calls 'this queer animal man' (*RF* 289).

The first section of the book, like that of *Flush: A Biography* as we shall see in the following chapter, is concerned with Fry's pedigree. The Frys, Woolf says, 'vacillated between two worlds. A coat of arms was first engraved and then scratched out' (*RF* 12). A 'typical' (12) Fry 'was a squire who refused to pay tithes; who refused to hunt or shoot' and a Quaker (13). Although all his ancestors came from 'precisely the same physical and spiritual stock' (13), Fry 'hoped that the quiet and respectable blood of his innumerable Quaker forefathers was dashed with some more fiery strain' (14), that his pedigree was in effect, mongrelised (I discuss the discursive connections between mongrelisation and racialisation in chapter four). His father Sir Edward Fry was a judge and a man of 'eminence,' whose library was 'ornamented' with 'the busts of great men' (24) – much like the ornaments in Flush's London home. There are further subtle parallels with *Flush: A Biography*; both Fry and Flush go to Italy, both are exposed to the world of 'Psychical Research' (*RF* 87), both are sexually promiscuous. In Fry's case, Woolf supresses this promiscuity, she 'chose not to reveal' Fry's affair with her sister Vanessa (Gualtieri 359). These parallels indicate that this is not going to be a conventional biography, and that it shares some concerns with *Flush: A Biography*, that is, mongrelising the pedigree. Fry's interest in illegitimacy is clear from the outset.

Woolf traces Fry's resistance to institutions to his boyhood and a brutal school master, '*breeding* in him,' (for Woolf eminent men are bred), a 'sullen revolt' against 'the whole Public-School system' and 'all those Imperialistic and patriotic emotions which it enshrined' (*RF* 38). At Cambridge he 'met the Darwins' and heard 'the usual stories of great men' (44) but *Roger Fry: A Biography*, it is implied, is not the usual story of a great man. He was, Woolf writes, 'in the first place a fearless and outspoken critic of institutions' including the Chantery Bequest, Royal Academy – which he called a 'colossal joke' (108) – and the National Gallery (113). That said, he was still complicit in these institutions, as curator and buyer at Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and as Slade Professor of

Fine Art at Cambridge. Nonetheless, Fry strove to 'avoid the prime danger of becoming […] a figurehead' (86). Eventually, despite, or partly because of the controversial 1910 Post-Impressionist Exhibition, which caused public 'paroxysms of rage and laughter' (153), Woolf writes that Fry 'became the most read and the most admired, if also the most abused, of all living art critics' (160), hailed as 'the Father of British painting' (165). She both emphasises Fry's anti-institutional feeling and struggles to reconcile this with his institutional status as a teacher at Slade School of Fine Art and curator at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. She writes that he 'very willingly' gave up 'the idea of official life and titles and honours' and was 'indifferent to them' (165). But her claim that 'Fry after fifty years had come to distrust all institutions' (277), seeking 'complete *social* equality' (his emphasis 98), with 'no idea of any class distinction' (221) remains in tension with his status and involvement in institutional life. Woolf, then, puts forward an anti-institutional message (somewhat at odds with the facts of his life) in a biography which is not as formally conventional as it might at first appear (and certainly is not as conventional as Stephen's *DNB*), even if it is not as experimental, radical, or Darwinian as *Orlando: A Biography* or, as I we shall see, *Flush: A Biography.*

To conclude, this chapter has argued that Woolf challenged and subverted the pedigree 'man of genius' trope, shaped significantly by Stephen's biographies and *DNB*, and his claims that Darwinian language in the hands of women promoted 'bad morality.' She did so on the levels of genre and (obscure) subject matter, using the Darwinian language that her father condemned in Eliot's (and implicitly other women writers') work. Woolf embraced this Darwinian language, with its metaphors of (always already animal) reproduction and proliferating meanings, using it to write (r)evolutionary auto/biographical genealogies as matrilinear, beastly, and illegitimate matrices. I have also shown that Woolf's beastly auto/biographies exploited the unincorporable remainder between signifier and signified through her animal tropes. The proliferating meanings and multivalency of Woolf's

signifying chains of metaphors and animal tropes disrupt the binary, hierarchical gender opposition principle which structures Western discourse, and so her language *re*constitutes the world for, and with, animals and women. This chapter has focused primarily on Woolf's inheritance of Darwinism through Stephen, laying the groundwork for my chapters on her direct engagement with his works, particularly the *Descent of Man*. I have also focused here on gender and pedigree, but these are intertwined, as we shall see, with the wider racial, imperial, and eugenicist politics of her animal tropes.

Chapter Three

(R)evolutionary Dogs:

Significant Otherness in *The Descent of Man* and *Flush: A Biography*

Section 3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 Woolf and Darwin's Dogs

Donna Haraway, in her *Companion Species Manifesto* (2003), calls for canine stories that 'teach us to pay attention to significant otherness' (28). Darwin's writing on dogs in *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* (1871) makes the radical claim that 'there is no fundamental difference between man and the higher mammals in their mental faculties' (86), and that 'animals do not differ in kind, although immensely in degree,' which 'does not justify us placing man in a distinct kingdom' (*Descent* 173). Bearing these statements in mind, this chapter will consider representations of canine agency as significant otherness in Woolf's life of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's spaniel, *Flush: A Biography* (1933), and Darwin's canine stories. I will begin by providing some historical and theoretical context, including Haraway's thinking on significant otherness and dogs. Then I will make three key claims. First, drawing on the work of Jacques Derrida and Giorgio Agamben, I will argue that Darwin's *Descent of Man* – specifically his work on canine ethics, language, reason, and imagination – was an unacknowledged intertext for *Flush: A Biography* which has been overlooked by Woolf scholars. The list of sources provided by Woolf at the close of the novel does not mention Darwin, yet Darwinian tropes abound in the text. And furthermore, when I transcribed the earliest manuscript draft (hereafter *FMS*1, the second draft *FMS*2) of *Flush: A Biography* I found passages excised from the published version revealing Woolf's

close engagement with Darwin's work on canine faculties.[23] Second, I will suggest that *Flush: A Biography* pushes beyond Darwin's use of canine anecdotes as scientific discourse. Instead, Woolf teaches us to pay attention to significant otherness by imagining different (r)evolutionary kinds of canine agency and by blurring the boundaries between human and animal at the levels of sentence, trope, and punctuation. Third, I will discuss how the frontispiece image of Woolf's dog Pinka in *Flush: A Biography* played with Darwin's notion of the photographed dog as scientific resource. I will show how Woolf queers and feminises visual and scientific dog tropes, playing with ways of signifying significant otherness *with* canine companions. In sum, I will demonstrate that in her canine novel Woolf engaged extensively with Darwin's *Descent of Man,* extending, (r)evolutionising and subverting his canine tropes. For Haraway, 'the field of evolution' and 'co-evolution' incorporates 'impressive dog fights' among human scientists and writers (2003 27). What is at stake in taking significant canine otherness seriously is, she says, 'who and what gets to count as an actor' in post-Darwin 'dog worlds' (2003 27).

3.1.2 Woolf Writes Dogs

Woolf published on dogs throughout her life. Her first essay written for publication, 'On a Faithful Friend' (*E*1 12-15), an obituary for the Stephens' mongrel Skye-terrier collie cross Shag, appeared in the *Guardian* in 1905. Dogs, including Shag, also appear frequently in the Stephen family newspaper, the *Hyde Park Gate News*, which Woolf wrote co-wrote with Vanessa and Thoby Stephen when they were children (*HPGN* 38, 39, 63, 79, 83, 152-3, 187). These are mostly pets, but include a report of a dog attacking Woolf (24), and 'An Essay on Dogs in General' (22 February 1892) where Woolf writes, 'do not take big dogs on your lap if you are a lady for it is not a pretty thing to see' (37). Moreover, Woolf's

[23] Transcribed by myself and Jane Goldman for the forthcoming Cambridge edition of *Flush: A Biography*. I am indebted to Derek Ryan, Linden Peach, and Jane Goldman, for allowing me to read a draft of their introduction to this edition, which has greatly informed this chapter. I use their draft pagination. In turn, I am delighted that their introduction and editorial explanatory notes cite this thesis.

childhood was 'full' of 'animals, real and imaginary' (Lee 111). We saw in chapter one that Woolf had animal pet names for herself – such as 'Goat' (*L*1 15), and even the plural bestiary 'Apes' (*L*1 377, 408, 466) – and for her friends. Woolf even had a canine persona, Potto, writing to Vita Sackville-West: 'You want Potto and Virginia kept in their kennel' (*L*4 10, see also *L*3 456 and Ryan 2016 115). The pronoun 'their' suggests a blurring between the plural (Potto and Virginia), and the singular; Potto *as* Virginia (or vice versa), destabilising distinctions between human and canine, and individual vs multispecies subjectivity. This excess and pluralisation of her animal names, for herself and others, including her canine persona (or indeed personae), suggests that her animal signifiers are always already unstable, slippery, multiple and, as we shall see with her dogs, multivalent. Dogs appear in her later works too, such as her unfinished 1939 short sketch 'The Dog' (*CSF* 334-335) and her posthumously published 1940 short story 'Gipsy, the Mongrel' (*CSF* 273-280) in which Woolf writes that there's 'nothing like a dog story for bringing out people's characters' (275).

Woolf came across Barrett Browning's depictions of Flush in the Barrett Browning correspondence after watching Rudolf Besier's play, *The Barretts of Wimpole Street*, in October 1931 (Peach, Ryan and Goldman 11). [24] Woolf wrote of *Flush: A Biography*, that:

> The idea came to me that he deserved a biography last summer when I was reading the Browning letters. But in fact very little is known about him, and I have had to invent a good deal. I hope however that I have thrown some light upon his character—the more I know him, the more affection I feel for him (*L*5 167).

[24] I refer to Barrett Browning (née Barrett) as such throughout for consistency's sake.

She was also interested in Barrett Browning as a woman writer and had engaged with the trope of the woman (writer) as a 'collar[ed]' dog in her earlier works (Goldman 2007 60, *AROO* 4). Woolf had recently published her feminist work *A Room of One's Own* (1929), and was revising essays on literary women for *The Common Reader: Second Series* (1932), including pieces on Mary Wollstonecraft, Dorothy Wordsworth, Geraldine Jewsbury, and Christina Rossetti, as well as Woolf's revised essay on Barrett Browning's 1856 poem *Aurora Leigh* (Peach, Ryan and Goldman 4). She was writing about women, Barrett Browning, and women-as-dogs, then, around the time she began her book on Flush.

Woolf anticipated that *Flush: A Biography* would 'be popular' (*D*4 181) – she sold nearly 19,000 copies in the first six months (Light 2000 xxix) – and aimed 'to parody' (*L*5 162) her friend Lytton Strachey's new biographical style. Woolf wrote the first draft from 21 July 1931–April 1932, the second draft from July–October 1932, and submitted the final (now lost) revised version in January 1933 (Peach, Ryan and Goldman 14-15, 51). The book was published in Britain and the USA in October 1933 (Peach, Ryan and Goldman 10, 21), and serialised in four instalments in the *Atlantic Monthly* (July–October 1933). I will primarily be referring to *FMS*1 (which contrasts most significantly with the published version) and the first edition of the British 1933 publication as they appear in the Cambridge edition of *Flush: A Biography*. The first draft of what was then *The Life Character & Opinions of Flush the Spaniel* begins with Woolf's notes: 'human beings & dogs,' only to swiftly switch her focus to 'What a dog thinks of a human being' (*FMS*1 145) in the following line. From the evidence of the first draft, then, *Flush: A Biography* was concerned with, and paid great attention to, 'a dog's world a spaniels [sic] world' (*FMS*1 97).[25] The narrative follows Flush from his early life as companion to Mary Russell Mitford, through adventures with Barrett Browning (including a dognapping and the Barrett Browning elopement), to his death in Italy, where the Barrett Brownings settled.

[25] Woolf's pagination.

Although Woolf wrote that there were 'very +few+ ~~little~~ authorit~~y~~ies for the life of Flush' (*FMS*1 197), she drew on a range of sources for the text. Her postscript to *FMS*1, titled 'Authorities' (*FMS*1 197), refers to Barrett Browning's poems 'To Flush, My Dog' (1844) and 'Flush, or Faunus' (1850); to various Browning and Barrett Browning letters; and to Thomas Beames's book about the East End slums (where Flush is held captive), *The Rookeries of London* (1850). Woolf's '*Flush: A Biography* Reading Notebook' refers to texts omitted from the 'Authorities': such as A. G. L'Estrange's *The Life of Mary Russell Mitford* (1870) – Mitford gifted Flush to Barrett Browning – and Hugh Dalziel's reference book *British Dogs: Their Varieties, History and Characteristics* (1888).[26] The introduction to the Cambridge edition of *Flush: A Biography,* identifies several other intertexts which are not named in Woolf's 'Authorities' or notebook, including Alexandra Sutherland Orr's *Life and Letters of Robert Browning*, Annabel Huth Jackson's *A Victorian Childhood*, and Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The French and Italian Notebooks* (Peach, Ryan and Goldman 6-7). Woolf had also reviewed Percy Lubbock's *Elizabeth Barrett Browning in Her Letters* (*E*1 101-5) in 1906 and published an essay on Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh* in the *Yale Review* in June 1931, republished in the *Times Literary Supplement* on 2 July 1931. This review was further revised for *The Common Reader: Second Series* (1932). It is clear then, that *Flush: A Biography* was a heavily researched and intertextual book, and that further sources may yet be unearthed. Woolf's copy of Darwin's *Descent of Man* 'shows some wear and dirt' (King email correspondence 2017) and was, I aim to demonstrate, one of these further sources.

3.1.3 Darwinian Dog Tropes

[26] The '*Flush: A Biography* Reading Notebook,' transcribed by Jane Goldman for the forthcoming Cambridge edition of *Flush: A Biography*, is distinct from Brenda Silver's *RN*. I am using Goldman's draft pagination. This notebook refers to the Browning and Barrett Browning's letters throughout, Hugh Dalziel's *British Dogs: Their Varieties, History and Characteristics* (1888 4, 24, 27), A. G. L'Estrange's *The Life of Mary Russell Mitford* (1870 5, 7, 12), the *DNB* on 'Miss Mitford [sic] Life' (vol. 38 1894 7), and Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe: A Romance* (1820 26, 29).

The first few pages of the published first edition of *Flush: A Biography* (1933) draw heavily on Darwinian discourse, and, as Woolf scholar Jeanne Dubino states, 'Darwinian language and concepts appear through[out]' (2011 144).[27] Woolf's use of evolutionary language, indebted to Darwin, was even more marked in first draft of *Flush: A Biography* than in later versions (Light 2000 xxxviii). This is clear from the prevalence of words such as 'origin' which appears six times in *FMS*1 and only once in the published version (*FMS*1 59, 147, 149, 151, 153, 155; *F* 7); 'descent' which appears four times in *FMS*1 and twice in the published version (*FMS*1 9, 123, 163, 169; *F* 7, 12); 'inherit' (*FMS*1 121, 157, 211) and 'adapt' (*FMS*1 135), which appear in the first draft but do not occur in the publication. All these words were newly freighted with evolutionary significance after Darwin. Woolf may have used this Darwinian language because, in February 1932, while drafting *Flush: A Biography*, she was reading *The Science of Life* (1929) by H. G. Wells and G. P. Wells, which discusses evolutionary theory (*D*4 68). Moreover, in spite of the excision of several of the above words between the first draft and publication, the opening line of the first UK edition of *Flush: A Biography* features key Darwinian terms: Flush 'claims *descent* […] of the greatest antiquity' and Woolf discusses the 'origin' of the word spaniel (emphasis added *F* 7). She also describes the evolution of the world through natural laws: 'Ages passed; vegetation appeared,' and, 'where there is vegetation the *law of Nature* has decreed that there shall be rabbits' (emphasis added *F* 7). Indeed, 'as the centuries took their way, minor branches broke off from the parent stem' with a range of breeds 'deriving from the original spaniel of prehistoric days' (*F* 9, 10). Humans are said to have 'claimed descent' from esteemed families and Flush himself is described as 'descended from' (*F* 14) a pedigree. This profusion of Darwinian discourse evokes the abundance of organic life that Darwin describes throughout his work, as we saw in chapter two. Dubino points out that the 'profusion of families, both human and spaniel, and Woolf's botanical language, recalls

[27] See also Dubino 2009 and 2012.

Darwin's famous "Tree of Life" diagram' (Dubino 2011 145; *Origin* 90, see fig. 1), published in *On the Origin of Species* and central to his theory of evolution. Her dogs are (r)evolutionary.

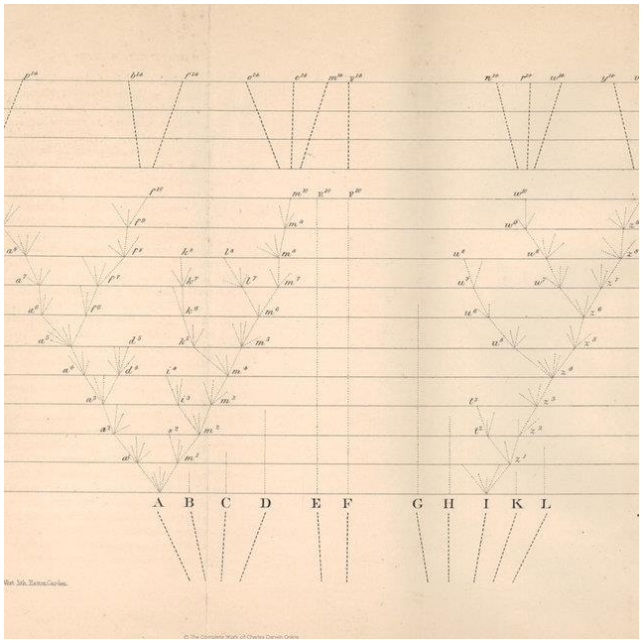

Fig. 1. Darwin's 'Tree of Life' (*Origin* 90).

Woolf scholarship has only recently begun to pay critical attention to *Flush: A Biography*: perhaps early critics took Woolf at her word when she called the book 'a joke' (*L*5 140, 155, and 161). Moreover, although there have recently been 'radical reassessments of the book's merits – perhaps more so than with any of Woolf's other works,' this scholarship for the most part eschews the evolutionary, animal, and canine themes of the text (Peach, Ryan and Goldman 11). Instead, it focuses on the text's exploration of 'networks of exploitation' (Peach, Ryan and Goldman 46) connected to gender (Squier, Goldman 2010b), class (Light 2007, Squier, Rosenthal), race (Goldman 2007), fascism and eugenics (Snaith and Peach 2012), and animality (McHugh 2004, Ryan 2013, and Weil).[28] As a protagonist,

[28] For further *Flush: A Biography* scholarship see: Beer (1996 102-103), Booth, Dubino 2009, 2011 and 2012, Eberly, Faris, Flint, Goldman (2010b, 2016), Griffiths (2002), Guiguet, Humm, Ittner, McHugh, Peach (2009; 2012), *Råback*, Ryan (2012, 2013, 2019, 2020), Snaith, Squier, Smith, Vanita, Weil, and Wylie.

Flush has been read as a 'stand-in for the woman writer' (Squier 124) or 'as a stand-in for that other dogsbody, the servant' (Light 2007 50), while Pamela Caughie reads *Flush: A Biography* as 'an allegory of canon formation and canonical value' (1991 146), and Michael Rosenthal argues that 'Flush is the story of Elizabeth Barrett Browning' herself, with Flush himself as a 'satiric device' (206). Many of these allegorical and figurative readings, as Craig Smith observes, betray an 'anthropocentric bias,' where *Flush: A Biography* is 'accepted as a serious object of study only to the extent that it may be represented as being not really about a dog' (349). Of course, any figurative reading depends on the vehicle (the dog) *not* being the tenor, but his wider point is that readings of *Flush: A Biography* are biased towards a consideration of human over canine concerns.

This bias is counteracted by Jeanne Dubino, who offers the most Darwinian reading of *Flush: A Biography* from within recent scholarship. (I consider Snaith and Goldman's readings of Flush as a racialised, gendered and beastly animal signifier in the following chapter). Dubino explores Woolf's use of 'Darwinian discourse in constructing a history of the origin of the spaniel' (2011 143), describing *Flush: A Biography* as 'informed by a deep appreciation and knowledge of Darwinism' (148). I agree with this statement, but my work differs from Dubino's in several respects. Firstly, where Dubino considers how *Flush: A Biography*, challenged the stagnant 'evolution' of the 'British class structure' (2011 144), my approach to class, outlined in chapter four, relates to *Darwin's* classed and racialized view of eugenics, and Woolf's engagement with these views. Here, unlike Dubino, I offer a reading of *Flush: A Biography* with specific reference to Darwin's work on dogs. Indeed, this sets my analysis apart from Darwinian readings of Woolf's work more generally, which have tended to focus on broader evolutionary concepts such as prehistory, origins, descent, and survival of the fittest (Beer, Dubino 2011, Lambert, Davison). By contrast, I am arguing that Woolf does not simply '*illustrate* several Darwinian concepts, including survival of the

fittest' (emphasis added Dubino 2011 147), but engages with the stakes of his theories as they relate to (r)evolutionary canine faculties, significant otherness, and animal troping.

For Haraway, dogs are 'powerful figures' who have 'always been where the biological and literary or artistic come together with all the force of lived reality,' and 'are at the same time creatures of imagined possibility and creatures of fierce and ordinary reality; the dimensions tangle and require response' (2007 4). Indeed, 'if he [Flush] is any figure at all,' Derek Ryan argues, 'he illustrates those of Haraway' (Ryan 2012 160), where '[f]igures are not representations or didactic illustrations, but rather material-semiotic nodes or knots in which diverse bodies and meanings coshape one another' (Haraway 2007 4). Both Darwin and Woolf's dogs draw on references to real-life dogs (Darwin's dogs, Barrett Browning's Flush, Woolf's Pinka) and create fictional dogs, working these allusions into material-semiotic nodes where dogs and writers co-shape Darwinian theories and canine imaginaries. Woolf's dogs are not just figurative, but point towards literal dogs too, and the ways these literal and fictional dogs are discursively entangled. Canine figures and tropes run on all fours after Darwin.

Using a phrase coined 'in honour of Virginia Woolf,' Haraway calls for 'A Category of One's Own' to describe certain dogs, arguing that 'unregistered' and 'categorically unfixed dogs,' 'mongrels' 'or just plain dogs' can tell us much about 'forging new possibilities' for humans and animals (2003 88). 'Woolf,' she argues, understood this, and 'understood what happens when the impure stroll over the lawns of the properly registered' (2003 88). Flush starts life in Britain as a properly registered dog according to the standards of the Spaniel Club, but then fathers a puppy by a spaniel who may have been 'nothing but a mongrel' (*F* 32, see my note on morganatics in the next chapter). Flush soon sires mongrels in Italy, and bonds in cross-species sympathy with the Barrett Brownings. The text follows what Ryan calls 'a journey away from hierarchical, essentialist categorisations based on inclusion or exclusion, and towards a more open, entangled zone of human and animal'

(2012 158), which allows us 'to explore a more fluid and nonanthropocentric relation between species, incorporating both the 'registered and unregistered" (163-4). As such, *Flush: A Biography* anticipates Haraway's call for 'stories of cross-species entanglements,' in which her term, 'Companion Species,' 'is less a category than a pointer to an ongoing "becoming with"' (Haraway 2007 16-17). In this sense, Woolf's dogs are '[f]igures [that] help [us] grapple inside the flesh of mortal world-making entanglements,' which Haraway calls 'contact zones' (Haraway 2007 4), extending Mary Louise Pratt's postcolonial term to the animal (Pratt 2). Woolf's (r)evolutionary signifying dogs will lead us to Derrida and Agamben, via Darwin's canine contact zones.

The connection between colonial and canine contact zones is not coincidental. Pratt's contact zones refer to 'the space of imperial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict' (8). She borrows the term 'contact' from linguistics, where contact language 'refers to an improvised language that develops among speakers of different tongues who need to communicate with each other consistently, usually in the context of trade' (8). Likewise, for Haraway, 'contact zones are full of the complexities of different kinds of unequal power that do not always go in expected directions,' in 'systems already constituted relationally' (2007 218, 217). There is a danger here in aligning racialised and animal encounters (or co-opting post-colonial tools), but as critical race studies scholars Srivinas Aravamudan (33-34), Bénédicte Boisseron (2), Che Gosset (np), Maneesha Deckha (2012 527), and Mel Y. Chen (14, 94) observe, animalisation and racialisation are always already discursively entangled, particularly through canine figuration which has often been used to dehumanise 'black' people. As such, Haraway's contact zones are textual hotspots where the racialised and animalised canine figure plays a central role. I will bracket this question for now, discussing it in the following chapter. Here, I focus on establishing the

Descent of Man as an intertext for *Flush: A Biography* and consider contact zones between humans and canines as figures and tropes in both scientific and literary discourse.

Section 3.2 Darwin as Source for *Flush: A Biography*

3.2.1 Darwin's Dogs

In *The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin: Including an Autobiographical Chapter* (1888), Darwin recalls his father telling him, '[y]ou care for nothing but shooting, dogs, and rat-catching, and you will be a disgrace to yourself and all your family' (32). Although this prophecy turned out to be inaccurate, Darwin's son Francis, who edited the *Life and Letters*, observed that 'My father was always fond of dogs' (113). Indeed, Darwin kept dogs throughout his life, and they frequently featured in his family correspondence, where he debated canine faculties with his sisters Caroline, Marianne, and Susan. They called his dog Spark his 'favourite child,' Caroline wrote of his dogs being 'melancholy,' Marianne reported Spark's death, and Caroline updated Darwin on his dog Nina's surgery while he was abroad on the HMS *Beagle*.[29] It is no surprise then, that many of Darwin's books incorporate canine themes and tropes. The central analogy in *On the Origin of Species* uses domestic breeding – particularly dogs (for example 12, 16-18), pigeons, and farm animals – as a stand-in for, and to explain natural selection. Darwin also discusses dog breeding and canine faculties on their own terms in other works, including *The Variation of Animals and Plants under Domestication* (1868), *Descent of Man* (1871), and *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872). I focus here particularly on the *Descent of Man*, a book which we know Woolf owned, and which quotes her father Leslie Stephen's work on canine faculties, which she probably also read. (As noted in chapter two, Woolf's 'diaries, letters, and published works—both fictional and nonfictional—indicate that Virginia

[29] Catherine and Susan Darwin 'Letter to Charles Darwin' 4 Dec 1825, Catherine Darwin 'Letter to Charles Darwin' 26 Oct 1825, Marianne Parker 'Letter to Charles Darwin' 23 Feb 1826, Caroline Darwin 'Letter to Charles Darwin' 12 Sept 1832.

continued to read and reread books from her father's library throughout her life' (King and Miletic-Vejzovic np)). Indeed, Woolf wrote that Stephen 'is not a writer for whom I have a natural taste. Yet just as a dog takes a bite of grass, I take a bite of him medicinally' (*MB* 128). Woolf aligns herself with the canine here, and Stephen with a necessary but unpleasant emetic. He takes us back to Darwin.

In *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* and *Descent of Man*, Darwin demonstrated that various faculties considered by his contemporaries to be God-given and unique to humans – such as morality, language, reason, and imagination – were shared by the 'higher' animals. He made the radical claim that 'there is no fundamental difference between man and the higher mammals in their mental faculties' (*Descent* 86). His evidence included numerous anecdotal examples regarding his dogs. His retriever Bob sulks and pulls a 'hot-house face' (*Expression* 62) whenever Darwin cuts short their walks to look at his plants; another dog remembers Darwin when he returns after five years aboard the HMS *Beagle* (*Descent* 95). The first illustration in *Descent of Man* demonstrates the similarity between human and canine embryos (27), and the first animal illustration in *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (52) is probably of his terrier Polly (White 2009 823).[30] Polly, when 'scratched with a stick, will sometimes show her delight' by 'licking the air as if it were my hand' (*Expression* 53) and tries to 'satisfy her instinctive maternal love by expending it on me' (114). She later appears, torn between going for a walk and her dinner, 'first looking one way and then the other, with her tail tucked in and ears drawn back, presenting an unmistakable appearance of perplexed discomfort' (118). Darwin's real companion species informed his research and explanations of evolution.

Darwin's numerous canine anecdotes would have been relatable to his readers. Victorian pet ownership was high in England, and 'it is in the Victorian period specifically

[30] In a line excised from the published version of *A Room of One's Own* Woolf writes that a 'sheep had given birth to a lamb with a dogs [sic] head' (*WF* 50). This embryonic canine connection calls for further attention. I would like to thank Paul White for his generous help with my research on Darwin's dogs.

that the practise of keeping dogs as pets' developed 'most meaningfully' (Howell 2015 11), with dogs constructed as 'part of the family' (16) and central to Englishness. Indeed, England's 'national identity was already connected with the dogs for which it was famous throughout Europe' in the early modern period, 'particularly' the spaniel (MacInnes 21). Darwin 'adopted' (Feller 267) Polly from his eldest daughter Henrietta, who 'worked extensively on drafts of the chapters of *Descent of Man* on mental and moral development' (White 2013 125). She also edited *The Autobiography of Charles Darwin* (1887) and *Emma Darwin, Wife of Charles Darwin: A Century of Letters* (1904; 1915), gifting a copy of the latter to Woolf (see chapter one). By inviting Victorian readers to look to their own pet dogs for evidence, Darwin couched his radical argument in accessible, relatable terms, domesticating his theories to soften their impact. Dogs get to count as actors here, and, as Haraway might put it, are not as significantly other as they first seem. Indeed, Darwin's dogs are entangled in contact zones which anticipate Haraway, 'implo[ding] nature and culture in the relentlessly historically specific, joint lives of dogs and people, who are bonded in significant otherness' (2003 16).

3.2.2 Animal Mind and Emotion in Context

In the eighteenth century, a range of thinkers were debating questions of animal mind and emotion. Darwin's influences included the philosopher David Hume, who argued that pride and humility, amongst other emotions, were 'not merely human passions' but also 'animal,' and that a 'dog, like a man, reasoned by building inferences from past experiences' as Jane Spencer explains (32). Darwin's notebooks also refer to Unitarian Joseph Priestley's *Observations on Man* (1749), which argues that animals 'must necessarily have, in kind, every faculty that we are possessed of' (qtd in Spencer 36). More orthodox writers such as Anglican churchmen also recommended '[s]ympathy with animal feeling,' in tracts and sermons that dealt with questions of animal mind and emotion 'as part of a moral argument

for the human duty of kindness to beasts' (Spencer 37). Such sermons would likely have made Darwin's radical views – for example that 'animals exhibit […] qualities which in us would be called moral' (*Decent of Man* 127) – more palatable to his conservative readers. Indeed, for Darwin's wide readership, 'the emotional lives of animals would have been familiar from a variety of sources, travel writing, natural histories of animal character, zoology and animal husbandry, children's stories and fables, the growing culture of pet keeping' (White 2013 122). The eighteenth century saw the rise of sentimental anthropomorphic fiction, exemplified by Dorothy Kilner's *Life and Perambulations of a Mouse* (1783) and Sarah Trimmer's *Fabulous Histories: Designed for the instruction of children, respecting their treatment of animals* (1786), and sentimental animal poetry by writers such as James Thomson and William Cowper (such as 'Parental Duties of Birds' (1735) and 'Epitaph on a Hare' (1785) respectively). These works 'encouraged readers to sympathise with the affections of beasts,' were 'widely cited in later animal welfare campaigns,' and 'anticipat[ed] Darwin's views on the continuity of human and animal emotions' (Spencer 27). Darwin's theories of animal mind, emotion, and morality then, followed a discourse of Victorian sentimentality, animal rights movements, popularised canine domesticity, and philosophical investigations into the faculties of animals.

At the same time, Darwin was writing against the traditional distinction in Western thinking between human and animal which hinged on the notion that *logos* (reason and language) is unique to humans. We saw in chapter one that Derrida shows us, drawing on the work of Aristotle, Heidegger and Lacan, that according to Western thought the 'animal is *alogon*,' without the powers of language and reason which give humans access to truth. The animal therefore 'has no relation to truth' (Derrida 2011 320-1). Haraway agrees that the 'history of philosophy and of science is crisscrossed with lines drawn between Human and Animal on the basis of what counts as language' (2007 234). We saw too that, according to Giorgio Agamben, this distinction between the *logon* human and *alogon* animal has been

maintained by what he calls the anthropological machine, whereby our humanity is separated from our animality by an internal 'caesura between the human and the animal' (16), a caesura which disavows that animality. He argues that the anthropological machine produces the 'recognition of the human' in contrast to the animal, and explains that:

> the passage from animal to man, despite the emphasis placed on comparative anatomy and paleontological findings, was produced by subtracting an element that had nothing to do with either one, and that instead was presupposed as the identifying characteristic of the human: language. In identifying himself with language, the speaking man places his own muteness outside of himself, as already and not yet human (Agamben 34-5).

We shall see that, while Darwin's views on animal emotion were in keeping with Victorian sentimental thought, his arguments for animal mind, particularly animal *logos*, went against the very foundational assumptions of Western philosophy and the anthropological machine.

3.2.3 Animal Faculties: Darwin and Flush

While recognising 'the impossibility of judging what passes through the mind of an animal,' Darwin attributes a wide range of emotions to dogs, including pleasure, pain, happiness, misery, terror, suspicion, courage, and timidity (*Descent* 105, 89-90). The higher mammals, he adds, feel maternal affection, grief, indignation, sympathy, and shame (*Descent* 91-2). He also argues that all the higher animals feel:

> jealousy, suspicion, emulation, gratitude, and magnanimity; they practise deceit and are revengeful; they […] even have a sense of humour; they feel wonder and curiosity; they possess the same faculties of imitation, attention, deliberation,

> choice, memory, imagination, association of ideas, and reason, though in very different degrees (*Descent* 100).

This list includes momentary sensations (like terror and pleasure), practises which require intent (such as deceit and revenge) and those which depend on a sense of the distinction between self and other (jealousy, for example). Derrida points out that in the Western tradition, the *alogon* 'animal neither dissimulates nor lies, because it has no relation to truth' (2011 320-1). Indeed, he observes that scholars from Descartes to Lacan state that the animal does not have the power 'to *pretend*, to *lie*, to *cover its tracks* or *erase* its own traces' (original emphasis 2002 401) or behave in ways which indicate that it could make itself the subject of the signifier of language and *logos*. Derrida takes issue with this claim, stating:

> an animal's signature might yet be able to erase or cover its traces. Or allow it to be erased, rather, be unable to prevent its being erased. And this possibility, that of tracing, effacing, or scrambling its signature, allowing it to be lost, would then have serious consequences (2002 401).

As such, Darwin's claims that dogs are capable of deceit and revenge are radically opposed to a Western philosophical tradition, which separates humans and animals into distinct *a/logon* categories. He opens up the possibility of considering such traces, erasures, and consequences. For Darwin, human and animal emotions all 'evolved from animal impulses' (White 2009 813), which 'does not justify us placing man in a distinct kingdom' (*Descent* 173). We will see that Darwin not only overturns this anthropocentric thinking by granting canine significant others relation to truth and deception, and therefore intent and *logos*, he also theorises animal *logos*.

Part of Woolf's Darwinian writing involved a similar (r)evolutionary attribution of

emotion and morality to dogs. Canine emotions – including sensations, feelings shaped by intent, and emotions dependent on a sense of self (distinct from other) – are key to *Flush: A Biography,* appearing across all drafts and published versions of the narrative. In *FMS*1 Flush feels sensations such as 'momentary joy' (*FMS*1 77) and 'terror' (*FMS*1 97) and in the first edition he feels 'love' (*F* 67), 'loneliness' (54), 'delight' (70), 'apprehension' (58) – and so a sense of futurity – and 'despair' (125), and feels 'emasculated, diminished, ashamed' (127). In each version of the narrative, as the Barrett Browning romance begins, Flush feels 'jealousy' (*FMS*1 147 and *F* 60) towards Robert Browning, whom he recognises as other to himself, and intentionally bites his 'usurper' (*F* 60) in revenge. Darwin claims that '[e]very one has seen how jealous a dog is of his master's affection […] animals not only love, but desire to be loved' (*Descent* 92). This is true of Flush who, in the first edition, is distraught when he believes that Barrett Browning, now infatuated with Browning, 'would never love him again. That shaft went to his heart' (*F* 61). Flush's capacity for self-reflexive jealousy, mentioned in the 'Flush: A Biography Reading Notebook' – 'B respects him for his jealousy' (1) – and deceit (*F* 63) is consistently present from the earliest draft to the published editions and were clearly key to her depiction of Flush as *logon.* Woolf anticipates and resists the anthropological machine through Flush's Darwinian faculties.

In all versions of the text, Barrett Browning accuses Flush of 'shamming' when he injures his paw, for 'no sooner had he touched the grass [in the park] than he began to run without a thought of it' (*F* 63). At this point, in each version of the narrative, Woolf quotes Barrett Browning's analysis of this kind of trickery in a letter to Browning (July 12, 1846): 'Flush always makes the most of his misfortunes — he is of the Byronic school — il se pose en victime' (*FMS*1 45, *F* 63, Barrett Browning 1969 871). But Woolf states that Barrett-Browning has 'misjudged [Flush] completely' in this description of his behaviour: in fact, the 'dash was his answer to her mockery; I have done with you — that was the meaning he flashed at her as he ran' (*F* 63). The implication is that, in running away, Flush is not just

revealing that he is not really injured, he is also *pretending* that he does not care what Barrett Browning thinks of him, despite the 'shaft' in his heart that her negative judgement has caused (*F* 61). There are layers of pretence here, Barret-Browning's accusation (lifted from her letters) that Flush is feigning injury, the actual incident she refers to (where we cannot know if the literal Flush was pretending), and Woolf's more complex suggestion that Flush the character is *pretending to pretend*, that in the Derridean sense, Flush has a signature. In short, Flush *does* practice deceit (though not in the way Barrett Browning thinks) and therefore has access to truth, in line with Darwin's views on canine capabilities and in opposition to the assumptions of Western philosophy outlined (and challenged) by Derrida. Flush therefore has what Derrida calls a 'signature' (2002 401) he is a (r)evolutionary 'actor' in post-Darwin 'dog worlds' (2003 27).

Furthermore, every version of *Flush: A Biography* contains a scene drawing on Barrett Browning's observations of Flush 'gnashing his teeth at the brown dog in the glass' (Barrett Browning 1900 np) in which Woolf's canine protagonist 'looked at himself in the glass' (*FMS*1 35) and 'examined himself carefully in the looking-glass' to affirm his 'birth and breeding' (*F* 33).[31] (That said there are scenes where he does not recognise his reflection and sees instead 'another dog' (*F* 24)). Darwin does not discuss dogs looking at mirrors in *Descent of Man*, but he does describe a canary 'singing whilst viewing itself in a mirror' (418) and notes that '[w]hen birds gaze at themselves in a looking-glass (of which many instances have been recorded) we cannot feel sure that it is not from jealousy of a supposed rival' (464). He also describes the behaviour of orangutans looking in the mirror in 'surprise,' before approaching 'as if to kiss it' and then 'refus[ing] to look any longer' (*Expression* 133). In this regard, Woolf's passage actually pushes Darwin's thinking one step further: Flush not does not see another animal in the glass – a rival or lover, as with Darwin's animals – but *himself*. Accepting this distinction, there remain extensive parallels

[31] For an analysis of the mirror scene see Ryan (2013 140-3) and Goldman (2016 165-7). This scene invites psychoanalytic readings which are not my concern here.

between the ways in which emotions are ascribed to dogs in *Flush: A Biography* and the *Descent of Man*. Of course, this may simply reflect the similar ways in which the two authors observed the dogs around them. But the striking extent of the parallels between their texts, not to mention Woolf's likely intimacy both with Darwin's writing and with the passages by her father which influenced the canine sections in *Descent of Man* (of which more below), suggests that Darwin's work on dogs constituted a key creative and intellectual source for *Flush: A Biography*.

Section 3.3 Beyond Darwin's Dogs

3.3.1 Reason and Language

Darwin revised his sections on canine reason and language in the second edition of the *Descent of Man* (published three years after the first, in 1874) in response to Leslie Stephen's essay 'Darwinism and Divinity' (April 1872), published in *Fraser's Magazine* and republished in his collection *Freethinking and Plainspeaking* (1873). Stephen's essay acknowledges the changing attitudes of Christians towards Darwinism (from horror to acceptance) and asks, 'What possible difference can it make to me whether I am sprung from an ape or an angel?' (86), answering that 'the philosopher's reason' is 'none the worse' in either case (87). He demonstrates that animals, particularly dogs, have more complex faculties than previously recognised. In preparing his second edition, Darwin was partly 'expanding on [the themes of] abstraction and other mental qualities in animals' (Richardson 2013 8); a letter written during this period refers to the influence of Stephen's 'striking article on Divinity & Darwinism' on this line of thought ('Letter to Chauncey Wright' 6 April 1872). In the second edition of the *Descent of Man*, Darwin refers to 'Darwinism and Divinity' three times (100, 111-112, and 134). In particular, he quotes Stephen's assertion that: '[i]t is difficult to understand how anybody who has ever kept a dog […] can have any doubts as to an animal's power of performing the essential process of reasoning'

(Stephen qtd in *Descent* 100). Stephen objects to those who have 'denied to animals even the most moderate share of our own capacities' (91), and argues that 'a dog is constantly performing rudimentary acts of reason,' such as 'testing the strength of a plank which he has to cross, or measuring the height of a jump' (92). Dogs, he says, also draw 'refined inferences,' such as '[m]y master is putting on his hat, and therefore I am going to have a walk' (92). He claims that dogs share 'what we call moral sense' with humans, and notes that he is 'heartily glad' to see animals finally 'being recognised as our relations' (91).

Darwin's second edition of the *Descent of Man*, building on Stephen's work, also argued that dogs were rational animals, capable of 'the power of abstraction' and of 'forming general concepts' (*Descent* 105). He wrote that 'when a dog sees another dog at a distance […] he perceives that it is a dog in the abstract,' but 'his whole manner suddenly changes' when recognising the other dog as 'a friend' (*Descent* 105). He adds that when he asks the family dog Polly 'where is it?' she 'takes it as a sign that something is to be hunted' and 'looks quickly all around': 'do not these actions show that she had in her mind a general idea or concept that some animal is to be discovered and hunted?' (*Descent* 105). Flush too (Both Barrett Browning's and Woolf's) is capable of inference. 'He could read signs that nobody else could even see. He could tell by the touch of Miss Barrett's fingers that she was waiting for one thing only — for the postman's knock, for the letter on the tray' (*F* 49), and he 'knew perfectly well from the expression on [Barrett Browning's] face that he was not to go with her' (98) when she elopes. Furthermore, Flush senses that something is amiss as she prepares to elope – 'the signs […] were unmistakable' (*F* 99) – during a passage which echoes a recollection of Francis Darwin's: 'when [Polly's] master was going away on a journey, she always discovered the fact by the signs of packing going on in the study, and became low-spirited accordingly' (Francis Darwin 114). It seems highly likely, then, that both Darwin's and Stephen's well-publicised views on canine reasoning were appropriated and extended by Woolf in *Flush: A Biography.*

A similar point of overlap, moreover, is suggested by Stephen's and Darwin's writing on canine use and understanding of language. Darwin, quoting Stephen again, asserts that dogs 'fram[e] a general concept of cats or sheep, and kno[w] the corresponding words as well as a philosopher. And the capacity to understand is as good a proof of vocal intelligence, though to an inferior degree, as the capacity to speak' (qtd in *Descent* 111-112). Darwin also notes that, while language 'has justly been considered one of the chief distinctions between man and the lower animals,' 'man […] is not the only animal that can make use of language' (*Descent* 106). Dogs, Darwin writes, have 'the bark of eagerness, as in the chase; that of anger, as well as growling; the yelp or howl of despair, as when shut up; baying at night; the bark of joy' or of 'demand or supplication' (*Descent* 107). In *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals,* he even gives his dogs quotation marks. One terrier wags his tail, 'as if to say "Never mind, it is all fun'" (66); another dog 'would throw himself on the ground, belly upwards. By this action he seemed to say more plainly than by words, "Behold, I am your slave'" (115). Darwin concludes that 'dogs understand many words and sentences' (*Descent* 107) and vocalise their emotions. In short, for both Darwin and his source for these passages, Stephen, dogs possess the kind of *logos* which, as Haraway, Derrida, and Agamben observe, Western thought has traditionally denied them. Indeed, Darwin and Stephen were making subtly controversial claims in attributing a canine capacity for *logos*, one that threatened to destabilise the hierarchical boundary between human and animal.

The first edition of *Flush: A Biography* embraces this (r)evolutionary acknowledgement of canine language and the consequent destabilisation of human-animal hierarchical boundaries. This is in spite of the fact that, in chapter one of the book, Woolf writes that between Flush and Barrett Browning, 'lay the widest gulf that can separate one being from another. She spoke. He was dumb. She was woman; he was dog' (*F* 27). I will discuss this caesura shortly, but the variety of ways in which Flush speaks undercuts the notion that he was dumb or that the two protagonists are divided by the (human) presence

and (animal) absence of *logos*. This communication includes barks, howls, and other recognisably canine sounds. When Barrett Browning becomes involved in spiritualism, Flush 'did not know which way to run. What on earth was happening? What in Heaven's name possessed the drawing-room table? He lifted up his voice in a prolonged howl of interrogation' (*F* 138). Flush's empirical questions are both howled here and written in English as questions, focalised through Flush (although not attributed to him or framed by quotation marks) using free indirect discourse. In this passage Woolf imagines two ways into canine language: canine sounds and the imagined meaning of those sounds posed as questions. Earlier on in the narrative Barrett Browning, referring to Flush being dognapped, says: 'Poor Flush, did the naughty men take you away?' In response, Flush 'put up his head and moaned and yelled' (*F* 96). This appears to be a form of cross-species communication, with Flush understanding human language and speaking through canine sounds, in which he certainly gets to count as an actor. These canine sounds are not *literally* sounds, but words on the page (howl, moan, yell and so on) which *signify* sounds, drawing attention to human language as the medium through which canine language is being explored, and through which the uniqueness of human language is being destabilised. Woolf invites us to imagine ways into canine language, points up the ways in which literature always already mediates canine voice through human language, and blurs the boundaries between human and animal forms of communication, attributing *logos* to Flush.

Flush's speech is also occasionally signalled between quotation marks, as when he addresses Barrett Browning's father Edward Barrett (regarding Browning, who has just left after a secret visit):

> His [Edward Barrett's] head pressed the same cushions that the man's had pressed, and yet he noticed nothing. "Don't you know," Flush marvelled, "who's

> been sitting in that chair? Can't you smell him?" For to Flush the whole room still reeked of Mr. Browning's presence (*F* 55).

This is a striking example of Woolf granting Flush direct speech in a rare deviation from free indirect discourse in *Flush: A Biography*. She is, perhaps, ventriloquising Barrett-Browning, who wrote to her friend Hugh Boyd (May 9 1843) that she has told Flush 'Mr. Boyd will soon be back again' upon which 'I think Flush said, "That's a comfort'" (Barrett Browning 1898 vol 1 np). Woolf nods here towards Barrett Browning's sentimental style, and perhaps other Victorian first-person animal biographies such as Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty: The Autobiography of a Horse* (1877). Doing so draws attention to Woolf's prevalent stylistic methodology – free indirect discourse – in *Flush: A Biography*. This methodology, where it is often ambiguous who is speaking, and difficult to distinguish speech from the shifting perspectives of the narrator and characters, opens up lacunae for the reader to fill with meaning and (non)human attribution. Woolf's technique helps us think through human-animal caesurae by drawing our attention to the unclear boundaries between speech, other forms of communication, and multispecies actors, disrupting the anthropological machine.

This direct speech act also suggests that when Flush addresses Edward Barrett, who does not respond or seem to understand him, dog renders man mute. We might rewrite Agamben's line – '[i]n identifying himself with language, the speaking man places his own muteness outside of himself, as already and not yet human' (34-35) – thus: in identifying himself with language, does the speaking *dog* place his own muteness outside of himself, as already and not yet *animal*? Does the speaking dog point to the human inability to listen and pay attention to the animal? Or does voice and communication precede the human-animal distinction? Woolf here raises questions for the reader without answering them, inviting us to rethink human-animal relations, hierarchies, and the *a*/*logon*. In another case, quotation

marks suggest an ambiguity about who is speaking, as when 'Flush went to what was now called "Mr. Browning's armchair"' (*F* 68). Who is calling this 'Mr. Browning's armchair'? Woolf does not allocate this speech act to a speaker, suggesting slippages between human and canine voices. She appears to accept Darwin and Stephen's argument that dogs understand human language and have their own kind of language. She plays with different representations of canine voice, different contact zones, inviting us to imagine ways into canine language. Thus (Barrett Browning's and Woolf's) Flush speaks, he is not dumb, and is not, therefore, 'separated' from Barrett Browning by the 'gulf' of language (*F* 27).

Woolf anticipates Agamben's caesura between human and animal in her ironic discussion of Flush's muteness:

> Between them lay the widest gulf that can separate one being from another. She spoke. He was dumb. She was woman; he was dog. Thus closely united, thus immensely divided, they gazed at each other (*F* 27).

In Woolf's '*Flush: A Biography* Reading Notebook,' she writes 'They were somehow the same – yet different. The difference of kind broken animal : man' (33). This line seems to allude to Darwinian difference 'of degree and not of kind' (*Descent* 151) between humans and animals. Here the 'difference of kind' is 'broken,' perhaps by Darwinian degree, by a colon or caesura, which allows slippages between species. Woolf's shift from a colon in the notebook to a semi-colon in the first edition, and her reversal of the order in which the human and animal appear in that edition significantly affects the way we read this caesura. The colon in the notebook separates animal and man, implying that if animal falls into one distinct category, it follows that man falls into a separate category and stands in opposition to the animal. Likewise, the full stop dividing 'She spoke. He was dumb' indicates an absolute boundary between speaking woman and mute dog. The semi-colon in the first

edition ('She was woman; he was dog.') is more ambiguous: it both divides and unites clauses, suggesting both opposition and connection, hierarchy and continuum, and an openness to boundary crossing. As Ryan puts it, the 'semi-colon appears to leave the possibility of boundary crossing,' of being, 'open' (2012 160). But her 'animal : man' and 'woman; dog' phrases suggest more than this.

Woolf replaces the collective terms 'animal' and 'man' (in that order) from the notebook with the ambiguous 'woman' and 'dog' (in that new order) in the first edition, terms which are neither wholly collective not singular: 'woman' and 'dog' are not preceded by the singular article 'a' and so appear collective, but simultaneously refer to a specific dog (Flush) and woman (Barrett Browning). For Derrida, the word 'animal' is a 'crime against animals' because the collective noun refers to 'the animal spoken of in the general singular,' and 'applies to the whole animal realm with the exception of the human' (2002 416, 408, 409). Such 'mass terms,' as Carol Adams has it (2018 5), evacuate the signified (individual creatures) from the signifier. These creatures, she argues, ought to be 'restored' to the signifier (2018 xliii). Woolf's shift from the collective nouns of the notebook to more multivalent terms in the first edition invokes discourse which reduces humans and animals to collective nouns whilst gesturing towards restoring individual subjects (Barrett Browning and Flush) to these terms, in a move that holds both collective and singular, absent and restored signifieds and signifiers, in play. In reversing the order and gender from 'animal : man' in the notebook (33) to 'woman; he was dog' (*F* 27) Woolf gestures towards Western discourse which places 'man' (a word embedded in the word woman) first in the human-animal hierarchy and restores woman (an absent signified in the word man when that word pertains to humanity) to such discourse, revealing that hierarchy's patriarchal underpinnings. Furthermore, any hierarchy between woman and dog is destabilised when we consider that woman falls on the animal side of the man/woman binary and is often discursively aligned with dog in patriarchal discourse (Goldman 2007 59, Oritz-Robles 22-3). Woolf's 'woman;

dog' caesura disrupts human/animal hierarchical boundaries through punctuation, slippery nouns, sequence, and gender. Darwin, on the other hand, disrupted such hierarchies by arguing that the characteristics considered by his peers to be unique to humans (reason, language, imagination, morality and so on) were shared by animals and originated in animal instincts. Woolf, then, pushes Darwin's (r)evolutionary work on human-dog boundaries further, by troubling the caesura between human and dog at the level of punctuation, syntax, and noun.

There are further connections between the Darwins, the Stephens, and dogs. First, Stephen fostered Darwin's son George's 'badly behaved' dog Pepper, but after 'failing to settle' with the Stephen's, the dog 'went to live with the Archbishop of Canterbury' (Townshend 121). Second, while Darwin was writing the second and third chapters of the *Descent of Man*, on human and animal faculties, he learned about Flush's first owner, Mary Russell Mitford. He wrote in a letter, 'Two days ago my wife read a passage to me from Miss Mitfords [sic] life, minutely describing a dog, which had been nursed by a cat & which licked its paws!' ('Letter to Asa Gray' 15 March 1870). Third, Darwin claimed that Walter Scott's 'famous Scotch greyhound Maida' – painted by Alexander Nasmyth and Edwin Henry Landseer – was capable of 'grinning' (*Expression* 115). (Maida was a gift from Alexander McDonald of Glengarry and named after the 1806 Battle of Maida in the Napoleonic wars.) Woolf also mentions Maida in *FMS*1 (121, 123, 199), though he is excised from the published versions. She laments that '[w]hen we turn to [Stephen's] D.N.B.' we find 'under the Ms,' Scottish antiquarian James Maidment, 'but not Maida' (*FMS*1 201). Perhaps Darwin gave her the idea to discuss Maida. Evidently, there were many literal and fictional canine connections between the Darwins, Stephen, and Woolf.

3.3.2 Dog Dreams

The most striking parallel between the *Descent of Man* and *Flush: A Biography*, which suggests most clearly that the former was a source for the latter, lies in Darwin's and Woolf's writing on canine dreams. In the *Descent of Man,* Darwin argues that dogs are capable of dreaming, and that these dreams evidence canine imagination, memory, abstract thought, and self-consciousness. Similarly, Woolf's *FMS*1 refers to canine memory and Robert Browning's 'story of a dog who had been let down into a deep well in order that a customer of a miller whom he disliked might rescue him & thus obliterate the memory of some grievance' (53). Woolf notes that 'this plan worked, & the dog's enmity changed to gratitude. Dogs have such memories!' (*FMS*1 53). The passage was excised from later versions, but the first edition still credits Flush with 'a million memories' (*F* 16).

Other similar parallels, on dreams and memory, can be found between Darwin and Woolf's texts. Darwin states, for example, that as dogs 'have vivid dreams, [as] is shewn by their movements and the sounds uttered, we must admit that they possess some power of imagination' (*Descent* 95-96). How then, he adds:

> can we feel sure that an old dog with an excellent memory and some power of imagination, as shewn by his dreams, never reflects on his past pleasures or pains in the chase? And this would be a form of self-consciousness (105).

Although the notion that dogs dream precedes Darwin, this quotation bears striking resemblance to two passages from Woolf's text in which Flush dreams of the past pains and pleasures of the chase. In chapter three:

> [Flush] dreamt as he had not dreamt since the old days at Three Mile Cross — of hares starting from the long grass; of pheasants rocketing up with long tails streaming, of partridges rising with a whirr from the stubble. He dreamt that he

> was hunting, that he was chasing some spotted spaniel, who fled, who escaped him. He was in Spain; he was in Wales; he was in Berkshire; he was flying before park-keepers' truncheons in Regent's Park. Then he opened his eyes (*F* 57).

Flush's dream is not 'shewn' by his movements and sounds as viewed by a human observer (such as Barrett Browning or the narrator). Woolf is not positing behaviour as scientific evidence of animal dreams and agency. Rather, she invites us to *imagine* that agency from a slippery human-canine perspective, to follow the animal following animals.[32]

This action of *following* anticipates the title of Derrida's 'The Animal that Therefore I Am (More to Follow)' (2002), a pun on the French '*je suis*' which both means 'I am,' and 'I follow' (2002 369). Both Woolf and Derrida question whether the human *is* animal, follows, 'or even supersedes' (Goldman 2011 125) the animal. Woolf's third-person discourse creates a false sense of distance from Flush, yet this passage is also focalised *through* Flush, using free indirect discourse. We experience the chase as Woolf's verbs chase one another across the page. Her punctuation evokes the darting, erratic movements of the spaniel flushing wildlife from the undergrowth, as she shifts from clause to clause, from 'Spain' to 'Wales' to 'Berkshire' (*F* 57). She dashes off with a dash – jumping between commas, semi-colons, and every full stop that brings us back to the 'he,' we are following, before we dash off again. As such, although 'he' dreams in the third person, the immediacy of Woolf's verbs and punctuation give the impression of first-person experience. Woolf's is an exercise in imagining the canine consciousness that Darwin speaks of, taking canine dreams beyond scientific discourse and into a place where, like Haraway, we can consider dogs as actors that count in canine stories after Darwin, and our own position as (following) animals, riding Agamben's caesura.

[32] See Goldman 2010a on dog-woman narrators.

In her final chapter, Woolf describes Flush's 'movements and the sounds uttered' (*Descent* 96) as he dreams, perhaps again of the chase. This passage once again bears striking resemblance to Darwin's thoughts on dreaming dogs in the *Descent of Man*:

> He slept as dogs sleep when they are dreaming. Now his legs twitched — was he dreaming that he hunted rabbits in Spain? Was he coursing up a hot hill-side with dark men shouting "Span! Span!" as the rabbits darted from the brushwood? Then he lay still again. And now he yelped, quickly, softly, many times in succession. Perhaps he heard Dr. Mitford egging his greyhounds on to the hunt at Reading. Then his tail wagged sheepishly. Did he hear old Miss Mitford cry, "Bad dog! Bad dog!" as he slunk back to her, where she stood among the turnips waving her umbrella? And then he lay for a time snoring, wrapt in the deep sleep of happy old age (*F* 147-8).

This passage is more like Darwin's than the first example of Flush dreaming, as, like Darwin, it describes canine dream behaviour and asks questions of the reader. Just as Darwin asks 'can we feel sure that an old dog […] never reflects on his past pleasures or pains in the chase?' Woolf asks 'was he dreaming that he hunted rabbits in Spain?,' and 'Did he hear old Miss Mitford' as she stood 'waving her umbrella?' (*F* 148) Having imagined the content of Flush's dreams in her third chapter, Woolf's questions in this last chapter remind us that that although we may follow the chase, our access to it is speculative. Her questions also invite us to consider the extent to which, and the ways in which, dogs have and experience memory, imagination, self-consciousness, the chase, and agency. Do they hear shouting? Or dream of memories? To what extent do they imagine? Are canine dreams inhabited by rabbits, other dogs (here greyhounds), humans? Or are they significantly other to human dreams? Woolf 'teach[es] us to pay attention to significant otherness as something other than a reflection of

one's intentions' (Haraway 2003 28), as something we cannot directly access, but can engage with on an imaginative level, that we can follow.

Mitford does not wave her umbrella at Flush in the *DNB, The Life of Mary Russell Mitford* or the *Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning.* She does, however, describe a highwayman almost stealing her umbrella, in a letter (1 Dec 1842) to Barrett Browning:

> I held an umbrella over the side next the outside of the gig — the side that was not Ben's [her servant]; and when we had reached a hill half-way between Reading and the Cross […] two men rushed from the path by the roadside, on my side, the left, and one caught hold of the pony's rein, and the other clutched at my umbrella — failing to catch it, but driving it against me in the effort. Not a word was spoken; but we felt the jar both of the rein and of the umbrella, Ben of one and I of the other, and heard the sharp heavy sound of a bludgeon striking against the shaft, which, luckily, as we imagine, also hit the pony. He darted on like the wind; threw off the man, who had caught the rein, and who, stricken either by the shaft or the step, was knocked under the wheel. The sudden shock disengaging us also from the man who was still trying to grasp the umbrella (Mitford vol. 3 163).

Although Flush is not mentioned, this passage offers an intertextual source for reading Woolf's version of Mitford's umbrella. In Mitford's letter, the umbrella is a form of shelter, defence, protection. Woolf also wrote in her journal (7 February 1897) that her sister Vanessa 'waved her umbrella wildly' at dogs who attacked Shag (*PA* 31), again the umbrella is a form of defence and protection. Bringing the Mitford, Darwin, and diary sources together then, Flush dreams that he has ranged beyond the safety of his owner's patronage, recognising her umbrella as a signifier of her authority, benefaction, and pastoral shelter.

This dream sequence places Flush at the centre of a species hierarchy chain, the boundaries marked by the umbrella, with hunted rabbits are at the bottom, canine companions in the middle, and a human at the top. But this hierarchy is destabilised when we return to Woolf's source and find Mitford in a tug of war with the highwayman over the umbrella, like a dog with stick. She is in some senses both human and the alpha dog in their two-creature pack.

The image of Mitford waving her umbrella is an intertextual hotspot which not only appears to draw on Mitford's letters, but may also allude to a passage from the *Descent of Man* involving dogs and parasols. Here Darwin considers the 'tendency in savages to imagine that natural objects and agencies are animated by spiritual or living essences' and argues that dogs share a similar animistic belief in spiritual agencies:

> my dog […] was lying on the lawn during a hot and still day; but at a little distance a slight breeze occasionally moved an open parasol […] every time that the parasol slightly moved, the dog growled fiercely and barked. He must, I think, have reasoned to himself in a rapid and unconscious manner, that movement without any apparent cause indicated the presence of some strange living agent, and that no stranger had a right to be on his territory. The belief in spiritual agencies would easily pass into the belief in the existence of one or more gods. For savages would naturally attribute spirits to the same passions […] The feeling of religious devotion is a highly complex one […] No being could experience so complex an emotion until advanced in his intellectual and moral faculties to at least a moderately high level […] we see some distant approach to this state of mind in the deep love of a dog for his master (118).

This passage does several (r)evolutionary and controversial things. First, it attributes the capacity for reason (*logos* again) and an idea of the spiritual to dogs, further destabilising human-animal distinctions.

Second, Darwin implies that humans do not believe in God because he exists, but because their *bêtise* or misunderstanding about the natural world has evolved into devotion. For Derrida, a *bêtise* 'confirm[s] not only the animality that [one] is disavowing but [one's] complicit, continued, and organized involvement in a veritable war of the species' (2002 400). Darwin observes that 'the belief in God has often been advanced as not only the greatest, but the most complete of all the distinctions between man and the lower animals' (*Descent* 682) and debunks this belief. Third, Darwin implies that human religious devotion is akin to the unsophisticated love a dog has for his master. Doing away with God and creationism allows Darwin to argue that, as with dogs, the 'several mental and moral faculties of man have been gradually evolved' (*Descent* 151). Finally, though this would not have shocked his contemporaries, Darwin aligns dogs and so-called savages in terms of their reasoning and belief systems. Indeed, these remarks recall passages in his *Journal of Researches* where he animalises indigenous Fuegians he encounters on his voyage, calling them 'miserable creatures' (203) and writing, 'I could not have believed how wide was the difference between savage and civilized man: it is greater than between a wild and domesticated animal' (196). In this analogy the domesticated dog represents the Englishman, whereas in the parasol passage, the dog was 'savage'-like. Darwin's dogs seem to move along a hierarchical continuum with 'savages' at one end and Europeans at the other.

Woolf appears to subvert the canine-savage analogy in Darwin's umbrella passage. In *Flush: A Biography*, it is 'civilised' British humans who are caught up in spiritualism and table-rapping, while 'Flush could hear and see nothing. True, the table was standing on one leg, but so tables will if you lean hard on one side' (*F* 142). Here, the dog is the sceptic, exhibiting a form of canine common sense and assuming the same position as Darwin and

Woolf, posing empirical questions, while Darwin's British contemporaries (Barrett Browning and her friends) are the 'savages,' who believe in spirits. Reading Woolf's sources together – Mitford's letters and Darwin's *Descent of Man* – opens up new questions about the politics of animality. Flush the sceptic knows that Mitford's umbrella does *not* have agency; he knows she is waving it. Mitford is not God either, but operates as a caesura between human and animal, as both his benefactor and companion in the tug of war at the boundary of human shelter. The umbrella then, is a rich intertextual metaphor that leads us back to Mitford and Darwin, to species hierarchies and canine theology. There are further parallels between the *Descent of Man* and *Flush: A Biography* that I cannot do justice to here. Nonetheless, I hope to have made the case for reading the *Descent of Man* as an intertext for *Flush: A Biography*, on the basis that: there are extensive striking parallels between passages from both texts; Woolf's narrative clearly draws on Darwin's theories about canine faculties, pushing this thinking further; Woolf owned a worn copy of the *Descent of Man* as well as sources (including by her father) discussing Darwin's work; and Stephen's work on dogs (which Woolf probably read) clearly shaped Darwin's revisions on this topic in the second edition of the *Descent of Man.*

3.3.3 The Expression of Emotions in Man and Animals

It is worth discussing Darwin's *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* briefly here because, although Woolf's library did not hold a copy when it was sold, she was probably familiar with the basic ideas in the book, as they were outlined in her copies of Francis Darwin's *Life and Letters of Charles Darwin* and his entry on his father in Stephen's *DNB* (vol. 14 80). *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* builds on Darwin's work in the *Descent of Man*, 'investigat[ing] as far as possible' the evolutionary 'causes of Expression' in humans and the higher animals, again destabilising species boundaries (*Expression* 23). Indeed, Darwin writes, 'man himself cannot express love and humility […]

so plainly as does a dog, when with drooping ears, hanging lips, flexuous body, and wagging tail, he meets his beloved master' (*Expression* 22). Interpreting this behaviour as love was radical and went against Adam Smith's famous claim that dogs' 'servile and fawning attention' was simply a form of begging (for food, walks, and so on): a puppy 'fawns upon its dam, and a spaniel endeavours, by a thousand attractions, to engage the attention of its master who is at dinner, when it wants to be fed by him' (Smith np). Darwin legitimised the concept of animal love as scientifically evident, just like human love, through physical expressions. He also blurs the boundaries between the expressions of humans and dogs at sentence level. For Darwin, expressions are not simply facial, but:

> may consist of movements of any part of the body, as the wagging of a dog's tail, the shrugging of a man's shoulders, the erection of the hair, the exudation of perspiration, the state of the capillary circulation, laboured breathing, and the use of the vocal or other sound-producing instruments (*Expression* 321).

At first, the distinctions between man and dog are clear – the tail is the dog's, the shoulders the man's – but the remaining bodily expressions could belong to man or dog, or both, and/or other species entirely. As such, Darwin invites the reader to consider where, how, and *if* any distinction may be drawn between species, implying that any difference is 'one of degree and not of kind' (*Descent* 151), of caesurae.

There are several passages in Woolf's writing where human and canine characters are similarly involved in these kinds of linguistic slippages as Goldman has noted (2007, 2010a, 2013). In *Between the Acts* (1941), for example, Bartholomew emerges from a reverie and '[a]s a dog shudders its skin, his skin shuddered' (*BA* 196). Here we see 'the literal and figurative collapse […] at this point of proximity between vehicle and tenor, all but undoing the safe caesura of the simile that the comma is there to secure' (Goldman 2013 477), thus

‘complicat[ing], thicken[ing], delineariz[ing], fold[ing], and divid[ing] the line precisely by making it increase and multiply’ (Derrida 2002 398). Likewise, when the narrator of *A Room of One’s Own* ‘propose[s] to slip the collar from my neck’ (*WF* 3) in the manuscript version – a collar that recurs in the published version (*AROO* 4) – she slips across the boundary or caesura between woman and dog. In *The Years* (1937), the ‘Colonel put on his glasses and bent down to look at the dog’s ear. Mira kissed him where his collar met his neck’ (*Y* 7). Does Mira kiss the Colonel or the dog? Does she kiss ‘him’ at his shirt collar or dog collar? The pronoun ‘him’ allows further linguistic slippages across human-canine caesurae. Like Darwin’s verbs, Woolf’s verbs (and pronouns) slip around. Both writers engaged, at the level of sentence, verb, punctuation, in thickening, blurring, following, and collapsing the hierarchical boundaries between human and dog. They do so to different (r)evolutionary ends, Darwin to support his theory of evolution, while Woolf teaches us to pay attention to significant otherness by imagining different kinds of canine agency and by blurring the boundaries between human and animal at the levels of sentence, trope, and punctuation.

Section 3.4 Picturing Canine Companions

3.4.1 Dog Portraits

Darwin’s methodologies for researching *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* included correspondence, international surveys, studies of infants, animals, people in psychiatric institutions, painting, and sculpture. His ‘was one of the first books to include photographs’ – he collected roughly one hundred of them – (Richardson 2013 60, 66), which Darwin found ‘the best means for observation’ (*Expression* 139). Where Darwin used photographs as scientific evidence of human and animal emotions, Woolf’s use of dog images has a different effect in *Flush: A Biography*. In 1926, Vita Sackville-West gave the Woolfs a red cocker spaniel puppy, Fanny, whom Woolf renamed Pinker or Pinka (I will use Pinka for consistency) and photographed as the model for the frontispiece (Sorensen

140) and dust jacket (Cassigneul np) of *Flush: A Biography*.[33] No known photographs exist of Barrett Browning with Flush (Sorensen 177, 140). The 1933 Large Paper Edition of *Flush: A Biography* also contained a lithograph of Flush's birthplace from an Edmund Havell sketch (c.1836), a John Lucas sketch of Mitford (1853), Field Talfourd's drawings of Barrett Browning and Robert Browning (1859), and a Michele Gordigiani painting of Barrett Browning (1858) (Peach, Ryan and Goldman 29-30). There were also four Vanessa Bell drawings: 'Miss Mitford takes Flush for a walk,' 'The back bedroom,' 'At Casa Guidi,' and 'So she knitted and he dozed' (Peach, Ryan and Goldman 30). Using a bitch as a model for a book about the male Flush 'would no doubt have appealed to Woolf's interest in sex and gender crossing, evident in *Orlando: A Biography*' (Peach, Ryan and Goldman 41), but this sex crossing *also* destabilises the function of the photograph as scientific evidence, as the hard granite of fact. Woolf's in-joke (only those who recognised Pinka would know her sex) plays with the discursive role of photography in scientific writing, and patriarchal traditional dog portraiture.

[33] For more on Pinka see Maureen Adams.

Fig. 2 (*F* 2)

Woolf's frontispiece image (fig. 2) is carefully staged. The reclining woman and thick fabrics in a domestic space anticipate Woolf's portrayal of Barrett Browning's early life as a bedridden invalid, and creates 'the illusion of a photographic window into the life of the 'real' Flush and his famous owner' (Sorensen 142). Yet the composition also undermines this 'historical' representation, this 'evidence,' through 'competing temporalities' (142). These include allusions towards Barrett Browning's sick bed, the sitter's Victorian-looking dress, the polka-dot chair in the foreground which recalls the furnishings from the modernist omega workshops (run by Vanessa Bell and Woolf's friends Roger Fry and Duncan Grant), and the violent cropping of the sitter's head. The staging of this image, rather than providing factual evidence like Darwin's photographs, draws attention to its own artifice, and to the stylised aspects of both photography and the fictional biography that follows. Photography is, Woolf reveals, an artform, not a window to scientific fact.

The sitter's cropped head leads me to traditional dog portraiture, which often depicts the entire animal body, either alone or with a human master. Woolf's frontispiece, as Sorensen points out, offers a 'dignified' portrait which conceals the dog's body behind the woman's skirts, and reveals only the dog's 'most human-like features' – her 'noble head and direct gaze' (180). In this sense it is more like a portrait of a human than an animal. Conversely, the reclining woman, whose skirts fill much of the frame, is truncated. The sitter's identity is concealed by the exclusion of her face from the photograph. Indeed, Sorenson argues that Woolf is the sitter and Leonard Woolf the photographer, as they 'had recently purchased a new camera and' often photographed each other 'recreationally' (142). Woolf was famously photographed in one of her mother's dresses for *Vogue* in 1924 and was perhaps doing so again. But this truncation does not just conceal the sitter's identity, it also gestures towards traditional hunting dog portraiture.

Images of dogs functioned as more than scientific data in Victorian and early twentieth century British culture. From the 1700s at least, according to art historian Viccy Coltman, dogs figured in art and literature as 'emblematic of a particular type of national masculine identity' and operated as 'literary tropes' or 'metaphors for national characters' (36). Such images were seen to illustrate the benign aspects of dogs' loyal characters, as suggested by Thomas Brown's *Biographical Sketches and Authentic Anecdotes of Dogs: Exhibiting Remarkable Instances of the Instinct, Sagacity, and Social Disposition of this Faithful Animal; Illustrated by Representations of the most Striking Varieties, and by Correct Portraits of Celebrated Or Remarkable Dogs, from Drawings Chiefly Original* (1829). Donna Landry observes that Stubbs's portraits of sporting dogs reinforced a 'gentlemanly ideal' (44) and functioned as tropes gesturing towards aristocratic masculinity. Cocker spaniels like Pinka and Flush were bred as sporting dogs (flushing game from the undergrowth but never catching the birds themselves) and were also kept as women's lap-dogs in the early sixteenth century England, long before the Victorian triangulation of the

pet, the domestic, and the feminised (Howell 2015 3). Although Darwin and Woolf use photographs rather than paintings, dogs clearly functioned as an iconographic trope in existing British visual culture, a tradition from which these photographs emerged. This tradition incorporated associations of both masculinity (sports dogs) and femininity (lap dogs) through the figure of the spaniel.

Fig. 3 Edwin Henry Landseer. 'A Scene at Abbotsford.' 1827.

The composition of Woolf's frontispiece recalls and subverts Landseer's famous portrait of Walter Scott's deerhound Maida – whom we know Woolf wrote about in the earliest manuscript of *Flush: A Biography* – with another dog sitting behind him (fig. 3). The anonymous dog almost appears almost to sit on Maida, just as the dog in Woolf's frontispiece sits on the woman's lap (or indeed her crotch, in a playful nod to their shared sex). Both images portray interiors, though almost in Landseer's relates to the outdoors while Woolf's frontispiece is almost claustrophobically domestic. Landseer's portrait gestures, like Woolf's image, towards decapitation, with a medieval-looking helmet separated from

its suit of armour. This helmet (unlike Woolf's sitter's head) is included within the frame, standing on a cushion almost like a bust. Surrounded by armour and weaponry, it suggests a Romantic medievalism in which hunting is akin warfare, the hunter a soldier. Furthermore, Landseer's portrait depicts aestheticized mutilated animality, with antlers in foreground on a fur rug and game birds and claws strung up in the background. Only the dogs are not dead or dismembered, but by operating as metonyms for the gentlemanly hunting tradition they cannot signify actual dogs, and are subjected to violence through figuration. The carefully placed figures contained within the frame suggest that all this violence has a beautiful harmony. For Woolf on the other hand, the violence of animal portraiture is made explicit and brutal by cutting the sitter's head from the frame. It is a human who is mutilated and made to operate as a setting, like the skin rug, rather than a subject. While the composition of Woolf's frontispiece appears to invoke Landseer's portrait, her image is subversive in its rejection of patriarchal imagery. Her use of a bedroom-like setting, the representation of the hunting spaniel as (literally) a woman's lap dog, and her move away from animal dismemberment to human truncation, all draw attention to the patriarchal violence of animal portraiture, offering a feminised alternative that has its own brutality. Both Landseer's and Woolf's canine images play with gendered species violence and temporality, but where Landseer's is harmonious and romanticises violence, Woolf's plays with traditional tropes and invites us to interrogate that violence.

In playing with her model's sex and staging a subversive re-enactment of traditional dog portraiture, Woolf both points up the symbolic function and lack of scientific objectivity in dog imagery. She destabilises the potential meanings of Darwin's photographs and dog illustrations as scientific evidence (just as she did his canine anecdotes), queers traditional British visions of national, aristocratic masculinity, and invites the reader to consider the function of canine imagery in scientific, literary, and visual discourse. One might suggest that Woolf here targets photography as scientific evidence *in general* rather than in ways

unique to Darwin. Her staging of a canine photographic portrait in a book which clearly engages closely with Darwin's work on dogs, and which alludes to his most photograph-heavy publication, suggests that her visual composition plays with specifically Darwinian thinking just as much as her textual strategies. Once again, Woolf destabilises and pushes us beyond Darwin's scientific evidence into an imaginary that raises questions about masculinity, femininity, and plays with the 'fact' of this binary, with the facts of canine tropes.

The picture of Pinka also plays with growing tradition of prefacing biographies with photographs of their subjects. Some of the most famous biographies in the 1800s lacked such introductory images, including Boswell's *Samuel Johnson* (1887), Mitford's *Letters* (1870), and Stephen's English Men of Letters biographies (1878-1904). That said, Woolf's four volumes of the Barrett Browning letters featured portraits of their subjects (the Barrett Brownings), as did many Romantic and Victorian biographies, such as Dr Currie's *Burns* (1800) and Thomas Moore's *Byron* (1892). Although illustrations had long been used to preface texts, photography was a new and innovative approach in Darwin's time. When Woolf wrote *Flush: A Biography*, however, it was commonplace to include a frontispiece photograph. The image of Pinka, therefore, *also* calls into question the role of the frontispiece, and the degree to which such images might be interpreted as conveying facts about the subject of a given biography. Indeed, as Snaith points out, the frontispiece invites 'comment on the gap between image (or text) and reality' (2002 633). The implication is that photographs and dogs in *Flush: A Biography* signify more than they first appear to, and trouble the gaps between image, text, iconography, discourse, and scientific or biographical assumptions of fact, as well as human/animal boundaries. Canine companions, tropes, and images trouble concepts of domesticated significant otherness in (r)evolutionary ways.

Finally, it is worth observing that Flush himself, in Woolf's narrative, questions the formation of human discourse. He observes Barrett Browning lying 'hour after hour passing

her hand over a white page with a black stick; and her eyes would fill suddenly with tears; but why?' for 'there was no sound in the room, no smell to make Miss Barrett cry' (*F* 37). This passage appears, through Woolf's use of defamiliarization (a dog might consider a pen a stick) and focus on smell, to be focalised through Flush, inviting the reader to consider the dog's view on the act of writing. Then, 'still agitating her stick, [she] burst out laughing' but '[w]hat was there to laugh at in the black smudge that she held out for Flush to look at?' (*F* 38). Once again, Flush appears to be posing empirical questions, challenging the function of discourse itself. Barrett Browning appears to recognise the limitations of linguistic discourse too: 'After all, she may have thought, do words say everything? Can words say anything? Do not words destroy the symbol that lies beyond the reach of words?' (*F* 38). We have seen that linguistic and visual figuration can destroy or reinscribe that which lies beyond the reach of words. We have seen too that dogs were central to Darwin's and Woolf's deconstruction of language, the (*a)logon,* as a species boundary. Perhaps Darwin had discursive dogs in mind when he wrote that in 'the distant future I see open fields' where, as 'natural selection works solely by and for the good of each being, all corporeal and mental endowments will tend to progress towards perfection' (*Origin* 359-360). Perhaps Woolf had Darwin in mind when she wrote that as Flush 'watched the same fingers for ever crossing a white page with a straight stick, he longed for the time when he too should blacken paper as she did' (*F* 39).

In this chapter I have argued that Darwin's *Descent of Man* was a key (r)evolutionary intertext for Woolf's *Flush: A Biography*. I have also shown that Woolf, drawing on Darwin's work on dogs, particularly canine faculties, engages with his use of dog anecdotes as evidence for evolution. Woolf embraces the radical aspects of evolutionary theory which collapse the human/animal binary and open up new ways of thinking about species and animality; she invites us to follow canine significant otherness and imagine a dog *logos* as Darwin does, to ride the caesurae between human and animal. That said, she destabilises the notion that scientific evidence, anecdotes or images, offer objective facts, troubling canine

tropes in scientific, visual, and literary discourse by paying attention to significant otherness. In the next chapter, I will show that she pushes canine figuration further, following the racialised, classed, and gendered underpinnings of this volatile trope, and challenging the eugenicist aspects of evolution as 'progress towards perfection' (*Origin* 360).

Chapter Four

Canine Tropes, Eugenics, and Ethics

Section 4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 Canine Politics

Flush: A Biography needs to be read in the context of Fascist and eugenicist discourse in 1930s Italy, Germany, and Britain, as Woolf scholars Anna Snaith and Linden Peach have demonstrated. Woolf's focus in *Flush: A Biography* on dog breeding and pedigree purity must, as Snaith argues, be read as 'part of Woolf's anti-fascist writing of the 1930s' (2002 632). I argue that *Flush: A Biography* must also be read as a response to Darwin's attitudes on racial purity, class and eugenics, as outlined in *The Descent of Man*. Darwin was a contemporary of Barrett Browning, and *Flush: A Biography* is set in the years leading up to the publication of *The Descent of Man*; just before Darwin and his cousin Francis Galton – who coined the term 'eugenic' in 1883 – began to apply views on canine pedigree to theories of human racial purity. I will discuss four significant insights into Woolf's anti-eugenicist writing which this Darwinian reading opens up. First, I will demonstrate that Darwin and Woolf engaged with eugenicist ideas which were popular across the political spectrum in both their lifetimes. Second, drawing on the critical race theory of Bénédicte Boisseron and others, I will show that dog tropes are always already racialised. I will argue that in *Flush: A Biography*, particularly *FMS*1, Woolf turns Darwin's dog tropes against the classist and racialised proto-eugenicist views expressed in *The Descent of Man*. I will also consider how Woolf's satire risks reinforcing the racist and animalised representation of the working classes which she challenges. Third, I will argue that Woolf challenges related discourses of patriarchal tyranny by turning dog tropes to feminist advantage. Finally, I will consider Darwin's and Woolf's interest in vivisection and the related implications for taking animal

consciousness seriously, then and now. Throughout, I will show that Woolf's (r)evolutionary Darwinian dogs engage, often subversively, with Darwin's work on eugenics, vivisection, and cross-species sympathy. What is at stake when we consider Woolf's signifying dog, '[m]arking and marked by race, gender and class' is, as Goldman argues, 'our status as subjects or objects, or as something between the two' (2007 50, 81-2), or, to return to Haraway, 'who and what gets to count as an actor' (2003 27) in a post-Darwin world.

Section 4.2 Eugenics

4.2.1 Woolf and Eugenics

The rise of Fascism in Europe during the 1930s was one of the key contexts for the composition of *Flush: A Biography*, as Anna Snaith and Linden Peach explain. The British Fascist party was founded in 1923, and the Imperial Fascist League splintered off from it in 1928, the latter having 'a strong presence in the [predominantly Jewish] East End,' where Flush is held by dognappers, and where the League could often be found 'preaching anti-Semitism, recruiting, and selling their publications' (Snaith 2002 626-7). Oswald Mosley founded the New Party in February 1931, which became the British Union of Fascists (BUF) in October 1932. Woolf was familiar with the New Party through her friend Harold Nicolson, husband of Vita Sackville-West, who briefly edited the New Party's journal *Action* before leaving the party in July 1931. Woolf also had points of contact through her husband Leonard Woolf and her friend the liberal economist John Maynard Keynes, both of whom were interested in the New Party before its anti-Semitism became apparent (Snaith 2002 626-7). Woolf read *Action* and would have known that the party supported eugenic sterilisation (Snaith 2002 631), like many on the left, including the Fabians. She would also have been aware of the broader currents of Fascist thought coursing through British and European culture at the time. The final instalment of the serialised version of *Flush: A Biography* was published in the *Atlantic Monthly* alongside Alice Hamilton's review of the 1933 edition of

Mein Kampf. Entitled 'Hitler Speaks: His Book Reveals the Man.' Hamilton's review discusses Hitler's analogies between racial purity and animal husbandry (Hamilton 405). The Woolfs' Hogarth Press even published a translation of Mussolini's *The Political and Social Doctrine of Fascism* (1933), alongside their own anti-fascist works including Woolf's *Three Guineas* (1938) and Leonard Woolf's *Quack, Quack* (1935). The latter, like *Flush: A Biography*, challenges the discourses of racial purity popular with Mosley and the BUF, turning Fascist tropes on their head by using canine language (references to mongrels and breeding) to evoke the mixed ethnic heritage of Nazi Germany. Leonard Woolf wrote, the 'Germans, like all nations […] are racially mongrels, and the idea that there is any pure strain of "blood," in the breeder's sense of the word […] is nonsense' (88). He adds that 'there is no reason' to 'believe that in the mongrel races and nations of the historical world during the last three thousand years there has been or is any strain or stock innately superior to any other' (91). Woolf visited Italy in 1933, before *Flush: A Biography* was published, and wrote to her friend Ethel Smyth (18 May 1933): 'I don't like Fascist Italy at all … there's the black shirt under the window – so no more' (*L*5 187). The following year, she wrote to Quentin Bell (24 Jan 1934): 'They think Mosley is getting supporters. If so I'll emigrate' (*L*5 273). In summary, though set in the 1840-1860s, *Flush: A Biography* must clearly be read with the realities of Fascism in 1930s Germany, Italy, and Britain kept in mind.

Woolf was, moreover, 'familiar' with the 'tenets of eugenics' (Peach 2012 439), which were popular across the political spectrum at the time, in part through her engagement with contemporary print culture. She would surely have come across the 'many articles on eugenics in newspapers, magazines, and popular journals such as *The Times*, *The Nineteenth Century*, *The Monthly Review*, *The Westminster Review*, *The Hibbert Journal* and so on' during the early twentieth century (Childs 25). We also know that while writing her first and last novels Woolf read H.G. Wells, who in the 1930s hailed eugenics as an opportunity to remove 'detrimental types and characteristics' while 'fostering of desirable types' (Wells

1931 3). Sometimes Woolf's writing even appeared alongside eugenicist polemics. One of her early book reviews was published in the same issue of *Cornhill Magazine* as Henrietta Barnett's essay 'Some Principles of the Poor Law' (1908) in which Barnett argued that any poor man should be 'detained if he fails to attain a standard by which he can support himself or is fit to call others into existence' (qtd in Childs 26). Such views were popular and not simply restricted to Third Reich discourse.

Woolf was connected to eugenicist thought by more than the ambient culture in which she wrote. Her friends Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson, Ottoline Morrell, and Keynes were all members of the Eugenics Education Society, while her childhood friend Mildred Massingberd was on the Reception Committee of the first International Eugenics Congress in 1912. Massingberd's husband Leonard, a son of Darwin's, served as president of the Eugenics Education Society in 1911 (Childs 27). Following Darwin's lead, many of the above thinkers were able to argue that some humans were naturally more 'evolved' than others, and that science could legitimately intervene in the development of the human stock.[34] Keynes supported legalised birth control 'checks' to stop people prone to 'drunkenness or ignorance or extreme lack of prudence' (Keynes 69) from reproducing, while Woolf's friend, pacifist philosopher Bertrand Russell, recommended that the state issue colour-coded 'procreation tickets' with fines for those who bred with holders of a different-coloured ticket (Russell 123). Woolf also attended George Bernard Shaw's 'Religion' lecture in 1916 which covered Lamarckian eugenics and was chaired by eugenicist C. W. Saleeby (Childs 27-8). Finally, Woolf's friend and lover Vita Sackville-West was, as Suzanne Raitt has shown, 'an unashamed eugenicist' with 'extensive knowledge on the subject' whose early novels are 'grounded in eugenic theory and the work of Francis Galton' (90). In *Heritage* (1919), Sackville-West's narrator advocates 'a new kind of eugenics, a sort of moral eugenics' (Sackville-West 10); in *The Dragon in Shallow Waters*

[34] See McCracken (2021) on Woolf, Aldous Huxley and eugenics.

(1921) the working classes are 'a sinister race, to whom affliction seemed naturally drawn' (5). Both novels imply that working class reproduction ought to be restricted. Following *Orlando: A Biography*, her love letter to Sackville-West, and following the end of their romantic relationship, we might read *Flush: A Biography* as an attack on Sackville-West's eugenic thinking.

A further point of connection to eugenics is suggested by Woolf's relationships with her doctors, given their views and practices in relation to contraception and abortion, at that time frequently couched in eugenicist theory. As Childs notes, Woolf may have been exposed to eugenicist thinking through her doctors Sir George Savage (who spoke at the First International Eugenics Congress), T. B. Hyslop, and Maurice Craig (28-31). In 1913, Woolf 'might have had a termination' following 98 consecutive days without a period, perhaps on the advice of these men (Lee 336). Though Woolf's views on contraception are unclear, she wrote to her friend Violet Dickinson (11 April 1913), 'We aren't going to have a baby, but we want one' (*L*2 23). Her husband and doctors discouraged her from having children on account of her mental health and she may therefore have used contraception and had an abortion for eugenicist reasons (Lee 334, Childs 29). These biographical events were unfolding when public figures such as Marie Stopes were promoting birth control as both a feminist tool and to restrict working class numbers, and Sidney and Beatrice Webb supported eugenic planning, Including the artificial insemination of working-class women with the sperm of men with high IQs.[35]

Although it is clear, therefore, that Woolf was familiar with eugenicist thought, it would be an oversimplification to state that she was either completely for or against eugenics. Indeed, in some instances, she appeared to be for it. In a 1915 diary entry, written around the time she was reading Darwin's *Journal* (Lambert 3, Beer 1996 14), Woolf wrote, after 'pass[ing] a long line of imbeciles' in the street, that '[t]hey should certainly be killed'

[35] See Alt (2010 114-138) and Goldman ('Burning Feminism' forthcoming) on Woolf and Stopes.

(*D*1 13). This in spite of her half-sister from her father's first marriage, Laura Makepeace Stephen (1870-1945), spending most of her adult life in psychiatric institutions for 'idiocy' (Koutsantonia and Oakley 280), a period of fifty-two years from 1893 until her death. Moreover, though Woolf 'never embarked upon a sustained exploration of eugenic themes,' her works are full of eugenicist 'allusions' (Peach 2012 439), often focalised through her characters.[36] In *Mrs. Dalloway,* Lady Bruton fantasises about populating Canada with young people 'born of respectable parents,' while Dr. William Bradshaw 'forbade childbirth' to some of his patients (92, 84). Both examples allude to the regulation of reproduction according to class and respectability. In a draft of *The Years*, Maggie observes some 'wretched little children' and says, 'stop them having children,' before discussing abortion 'for the welfare of the human race' (qtd in Childs 36). Perhaps most strikingly, the narrator in *Three Guineas* proposes, perhaps ironically, 'a wage' for 'the very class where births are desirable – the educated class' (*TG* 75). While she explores eugenicist ideas in her writing, it is unclear where she is being satirical, and whether her characters' views align with her own.

At the same time, Woolf wrote against eugenics, particularly regarding the connection between eugenics and notions of male inheritance: biological, intellectual, and economic. The inheritance of property and genius is a key theme in Woolf's works. The exclusion of women from both the inheritance of property and a male literary lineage are significant themes in *Orlando* (as we shall see, Galton theorised an inherited *male* genius in *Hereditary Genius*), while the male protagonists of *The Waves* soliloquise their 'literary lineage' (Peach 2012 441). By contrast, in *A Room of One's Own* Woolf traces a cultural lineage of female writers which implicitly counters Galton's male-centred biological genealogy. 'Without […] forerunners,' Woolf states, 'Jane Austen and the Brontës and George Eliot could no more have written than Shakespeare could have written without

[36] See Peach's examples of eugenicist allusions across Woolf's works (2012 441-2).

Marlowe, or Marlowe without Chaucer' (*AROO* 49). By the early 1930s, Woolf was exploring ideas about eugenics with a pointed scepticism in her drafts of *Flush: A Biography*. She ironizes ideas about controlled breeding by pointing out how arbitrary and contingent dog breeding standards are, and by inviting us to consider the consequences of reprobates such as Mr. Mitford being prevented from 'perpetuat[ing] his kind' (*F* 12). On the other hand, as I aim to tease out, Woolf's satire blurs the lines between critiquing and reinforcing the animalisation and racialisation of the working classes in *Flush: A Biography*, in ways that draw on Malthusian, Darwinian, Galtonian, and eugenicist discourse. Animal tropes always already invoke such associations, but there is a danger in challenging racist, classist discourse through satire, as Woolf does here. Certainly, if misread, her satire risked reinforcing the dominant narrative which it sought to undercut, a particular risk because, as Melba Cuddy-Keane notes, critics and readers often 'failed to detect satire from a woman's pen' (150) and were frequently 'oblivious to Woolf's irony' (151). I will argue that Woolf herself slips from a clearly satirical bestialisation of the poor to what reads as an ambiguous racialisation of people living in the slums in which satire and irony tread unstable ground.

4.2.2 Eugenics and Descent

Flush: A Biography must be read not just with eugenics, but specifically with Darwin's views on eugenics in mind. Darwin's understanding that 'Natural selection follows from the struggle for existence; and this from a rapid state of increase' (*Descent* 168) was central to his theory of evolution and was greatly influenced by the work of Thomas Malthus (1766-1834). In *The Descent of Man*, Darwin refers the reader to Malthus's 'ever memorable' (63) *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798), in which Malthus argues that the 'power of population [increase] is indefinitely greater than the power in the earth to produce subsistence for man' (Malthus 13). In *The Descent of Man*, Darwin agrees that the 'primary or fundamental check to the continued increase of man is the difficulty of gaining

subsistence,' and observes that population increase is 'check[ed]' by infant mortality, disease, wars, and emigration (63-4). Darwin's thoughts on population 'checks' were also indebted to what he called Francis Galton's 'admirable labours' in his 'great work' (*Descent* 46, 159) *Hereditary Genius* (1869). Galton, Darwin's cousin, went on to coin the term 'eugenic' in 1883, was president of the Eugenic Education Society (established 1907), and wrote the foreword for the first issue of *The Eugenic Review* (1909).

In *Hereditary Genius*, as James Moore and Adrian Desmond put it, 'Galton had conceived the not unflattering idea that genius runs in families, like the Darwins, and can be increased by selective breeding' (*Descent* xlvi). Darwin wrote to Galton, to 'congratulate' him on *Hereditary Genius*, claiming he had never 'read anything more interesting & original,' and that Galton had 'made a convert of an opponent' ('Letter to Francis Galton' 23 December 1869). He also wrote to Galton regarding his article which proposed a register of superior families, though he anticipated difficulties for Galton's 'grand' and 'utopian' plan for 'improving the human race,' such as 'deciding who deserved to be on the register' and 'how the families on the Register are to be kept pure or superior, & […] still further improved' ('Letter to Francis Galton' 4 January 1873). Galton used the Stephen family as well as the Darwins to evidence his theory of inherited genius (placing the families under the headings 'Men of Science' and 'Literary Men' respectively). Amongst notable 'Stephens' Galton mentions: colonial statesman Sir James Stephen; Master in Chancery and abolitionist John Stephen; the 'eminent' Henry John Stephen; Sir George; FitzJames Stephen, Q.C.; and Leslie Stephen, 'contributor to periodical literature; mountaineer, president of the Alpine Club' (Galton 185). These men formed what historian Noel Annan famously called the 'The Intellectual Aristocracy' (304), consisting of a few families centred in and around Cambridge, with an emphasis on intellectual rather than blood relations. The Stephen women are not mentioned. Indeed, the female 'Literary Men' are often unnamed or partially named, including Jane Austen, misnamed Sarah (73), the Brontë sisters, and

Charles Lamb's unnamed sister.[37] Galton catalogued eminent men into genealogies that largely elided or mislabelled women and suggested that heredity and genius were male concerns.

In *Hereditary Genius*, Galton proposed checks and incentives to regulate 'the improvement of the race,' through scholarships and early marriage for the 'gifted'; naturalisation of 'the better sort of emigrants and refugees'; societal 'pride of race'; and 'celibate monasteries or sisterhoods' for the 'weak' (Galton 415). Darwin discusses Galton's work in *The Descent of Man,* and states that:

> [w]ith savages, the weak in body or mind are soon eliminated […] We civilised men, on the other hand, do the utmost to check the process of elimination; we build asylums for the imbecile, the maimed, and the sick; we institute poor-laws; and our medical men exert their utmost skill to save the life of every one to the last moment […] Thus the weak members of civilised societies propagate their kind (159).

There are three things I want to draw out of this disturbing passage and the paragraphs that follow it in *The Descent of Man*. First, Darwin appears sympathetic to Galton's eugenicist views about the decline of the race, second, that sympathy was at the crux of the issue of population 'checks,' and third, that Darwin then drew on breeding analogies to support his argument against humans propagating 'the weak members' of 'their kind' (*Descent* 159).

Darwin argued that the 'aid which we feel impelled to give the helpless is mainly an incidental result of the instinct of sympathy, which was originally acquired as part of the

[37] Other female Men of Literature included: Lady Duff Gordon, Maria Edgeworth, Sarah Fielding, Eleanor Hallam, Richard Roberts' unnamed daughter, an unnamed housemaid, Anne Germaine de Stael, Susanna Curchod, Petronella and Nicole Stephens, Mary Countess of Pembroke, a Dorothy (no surname), Mrs. Austen Taylor, Mrs. Frances Trollope, and 'poetess' Emily Taylor (189).

social instincts' (*Descent* 159). He argued that the 'the all-important emotion of sympathy' was the 'primary impulse and guide' of both humans and animals, from which the 'moral sense' evolved (*Descent* 129, 145, 121).[38] The unpopular claim that the human moral impulse both evolved and was shared by animals challenged Cartesian Humanist views of hierarchical human/animal distinctions (White 2013 122). When discussing sympathy for the weak Darwin adds: '[n]or could we check our sympathy, even at the urging of hard reason, without deterioration in the noblest part of our nature,' for 'if we were intentionally to neglect the weak and helpless, it could only be for a contingent benefit, with an overwhelming present evil' (*Descent* 159). Rather than take the 'rational' approach outlined by Galton, Darwin proposes a form of liberal eugenics. He states that '[b]oth sexes ought to refrain from marriage if in any marked degree inferior in body or mind,' and 'all ought to refrain from marriage who cannot avoid abject poverty for their children' (*Descent* 688). Contraception was not, in Darwin's view, an option. In 1877, Charles Bradlaugh and Annie Besant published Charles Knowlton's 1832 birth control pamphlet *Fruits of Philosophy: The Private Companion of Young Married People*. When they were tried for obscenity they asked to subpoena Darwin. He wrote to Bradlaugh that he opposed contraception ('Letter to Charles Bradlaugh' 6 June 1877). As he put it in *The Descent of Man*, 'our natural rate of increase […] must not be greatly diminished by any means' (688), including artificial means. Besant and Bradlaugh were sentenced to six months in prison (*Descent* liii). Sympathy then, was both the noblest part of humanity, and the reason for 'the degeneration of a domestic race' (*Descent* 159).[39]

Despite this emphasis on our natural human sympathies, Darwin demonstrated his distaste for the propagation of 'weak' humans in *Descent of Man* via references to animal breeding, an analogy that Woolf directly interrogates in *Flush: A Biography*. Darwin states

[38] See White (2006, 2009, 2011, 2013).
[39] Percy Bysshe Shelley advocated for the vaginal sponge as a form of contraceptive (St. Claire 464) and condemned Malthus' proposal that the poor 'abstain from sexual intercourse' (Shelley 1920 53).

that '[n]o one who has attended to the breeding of animals will doubt' that preserving the 'weak' 'must be highly injurious to the race of man' (*Descent* 159). He adds that 'excepting in the case of man himself, hardly anyone is so ignorant as to allow his worst animals to breed' (*Descent* 159), an analogy which aligns disabled, poor, and ill people with animals that a breeder would kill or sterilise. Finally, he observes that 'man differs widely from any strictly domesticated animal; for his breeding has never long been controlled' (*Descent* 46). Woolf makes a similar point, albeit with a heavy dash of irony, about unregulated human breeding in *Flush: A Biography*: 'if we now turn to human society, what chaos and confusion meet the eye! No Club has any such jurisdiction upon the breed of man,' only the 'Heralds College' resembles the 'Spaniel Club' in its 'attempt to preserve the purity of the human family' (*F* 11). She adds that if the standards of the Kennel Club were applied to Mr. Mitford, the drunken gambling father of Flush's first owner, he would not be 'allowed to perpetuate his kind' (*F* 12). Whether or not this is a good thing is left to the reader to decide. In *FMS*1, however, Woolf makes a much more explicit connection between canine pedigree, and the inheritance of racialised *human* pedigree, and property, suggesting that human breeding *is* regulated. She focuses on the erasure of illegitimate, racialised, and working-class bastard children, deemed by the aristocratic to be significantly other, as I will explore below. This leads me to questions of Darwinian eugenics in Woolf's works.

Section 4.3 Darwinian Eugenics and Race

4.3.1 Canine Contact Zones

Eugenics was an issue inextricably connected to questions of biological racism for Woolf, whose most explicit critique of Darwinian eugenics comes in the form of various allusions to spurious constructions of race and pedigree in the *FMS*1 version of *Flush: A Biography*. It is worth recalling that Haraway's notion of canine 'contact zones' draws on Mary Louise Pratt's postcolonial terminology, invoking 'the space of imperial encounters' which

'establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict' (8). For Haraway, '[s]uch contact zones are full of the complexities of different kinds of unequal power that do not always go in expected directions' (2007 218), in 'systems already constituted relationally' (217). Postcolonial and critical race studies scholars including Srivinas Aravamudan (33-34), Bénédicte Boisseron (2), Che Gossett (np), Maneesha Deckha (252), and Mel Y. Chen (14, 94) observe that animalisation and racialisation are intimately discursively entangled. As Deckha puts it, under colonialism the 'cultivation of ideas of race, culture, gender, and species' was 'interactive and mutually constitutive' (2008 252). Gossett's *Blacknesss, Animality, and the Unsovereign* (2015), plays on Derrida's *The Beast and the Sovereign*, highlighting how animal studies often considers the human/animal divide but 'fails to think about how Blackness,' (and we might add classed others, often racialised as black) 'has been placed outside of the category of the human' (1). Indeed, Boisseron observes that the animal turn 'offers a unique chance to take an in-depth look' at systems of 'mutual racialisation and animalisation' (2).

There are of course issues with co-opting postcolonial terminology for animal studies purposes. The 'colonial racialization of blackness has figured and functioned as the animalization and bestialization of blackness' and 'black' people have 'historically been portrayed through scientific racism' and related discourse 'as animal like' (Gossett np). Indeed, '[a]rguably, African slaves first bore the epistemological weight of animalization' (Chen 111). Therefore, 'blackness should constitute the primary matrix' (Boisseron 13) for thinking through the animal question, rather than a 'platform to set the scene of animal studies' (2). As Boisseron points out, and as Aravamudan has discussed, questions of animality and racialisation often figure in canine tropes, as for example with the 'petting' (or making a pet) of the fictional enslaved Surinam prince Oroonoko (Aravamudan 29), which I discuss further below. Boisseron discusses the violent use of dogs against 'black' people (enslaved people, civil rights activists, and African Americans) by enslavers and

police, and the canine figuration of 'black' people historically in Western discourse (1-36). Because racism and classism have 'been shown to overlap in systems of exploitation and discrimination' (Boisseron 24), and because canine figures are central to such discourse, I will address race and class as intersecting issues for thinking through the racial politics of dog tropes in *Flush: A Biography*. Haraway and Woolf's canine contact zones are textual hotspots where the racialised, classed and animalised meet in the trope of the dog.

In *Flush: A Biography*, racialisation and animalisation are inextricably linked. Once in Italy, Flush gives up his role as a pedigree dog who abides by the laws of the Spaniel Club. Instead, 'careless of the signs of rank' (*F* 127), he ruts with the mongrels of Italy. Immediately after this renunciation, Woolf says in the published version that if an 'English peer' is 'rumour[ed]' to have become a Muslim or had 'a son by a Chinese washerwoman,' his 'old friends are ready enough to overlook these aberrations' and 'he is asked to Chatsworth' (*F* 131). But in the *FMS*1 version of this passage, she explicitly name-calls aristocrats who, she suggests, have disinherited their biracial bastard children. This is the *FMS*1 passage:

> he [Flush] had voluntarily ~~ad ab~~ renounced his rank, & contracted alliances which were not recognised by the Kennel Club, which the Spaniel Club would ignore, no doubt had its weight in loosening the family ties, the strict bonds of family life; ~~for when a if an English~~ the most {tolerant} & democratic English peer – shall we say the late Duke of Devonshire or Norfolk – would hardly care to assent strictly to the right of ~~the~~ a +coal+ black son by a negress, of a ~~coff~~ yellow son by a Chinese lady, to inherit the ancestral splendours of Arundel & Chatsworth (*FMS*1 157).

Here the peers are not *invited* to Chatsworth, or Arundel, but *own* these estates.[40] What is at stake is who gets to count not only as an actor, but as an inheritor of property and pedigree, and who is *disinherited* on account of their significant otherness. Woolf draws an explicit parallel between canine pedigree and racialised human pedigree. She invokes discourse that implies that mongrel dogs and people of colour are synonymous others, subordinate to the white aristocratic male human self, the self that has the right to inherit.

Her (r)evolutionary satire operates on multiple levels of discourse here, appropriating the dominant narrative that equates dogs and people of colour both to undercut that discourse and potentially to reinforce it in the eyes of readers 'oblivious to Woolf's irony' (Cuddy Keane 151). Simultaneously, she celebrates the flip side of pedigree and racial purity – mongrelisation – in a move which calls into question the pure/impure binary. Flush renounces his pedigree, turning against the eugenicist discourse of pedigree, and so takes the kind of moral position thought unique to humans until – perhaps – the publication of *The Descent of Man*. Woolf implies that British human society, in both Barrett Browning and Darwin's time and, by implication, in the 1930s, practises a form of eugenicist, racialised breeding. By this means she implies that racist, eugenicist discourse and practises are not simply unique to Nazi, Italian, and BUF rhetoric. Rather, inheritance in Britain, and by extension the whole structure of British society, is *defined* by this racialised, eugenicist fixation with human pedigree. We shall see in chapter six that this logic underpins Woolf's critique of patriarchy in *Three Guineas*. In the course of critiquing such discourse by identifying it in the British aristocracy, Woolf turns Darwin's dogs against the beastly eugenicist views he expresses in *The Descent of Man.*

The significance of what Goldman calls the 'racial cast to Woolf's canine signifier' (2010b 51) becomes clearer when we consider how the signifying dog, as Goldman notes,

[40] At the time, the Duke of Devonshire was Victor Christian William Cavendish (31 May 1868 – 6 May 1938), Secretary of State to the Colonies from 1922-1924, and the Duke of Norfolk was politician Bernard Marmaduke Fitzalan-Howard (30 May 1908 – 31 January 1975).

gestures towards slavery throughout Woolf's works, especially to Aphra Behn's enslaved African Prince *Oroonoko* (1688). Srivinas Aravamudan observes that '*Oroonoko* responds to the coordinated logic of the aristocratic pethood of Africans' exemplified at the time by newspaper advertisements selling 'silver padlocks for blacks or dogs' (38). Indeed, in stage performances of Southerne's *Oroonoko*, the lead actor 'would have worn an ornamental collar on stage' (39). The figure of Oroonoko in Behn's novel is, Aravamudan argues, not only 'a vassal or slave, but also as a pet' (41). Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* cites two Behn poems – 'A Thousand Martyrs I have made' and 'Love in Fantastic Triumph Sat' (*AROO* 48) – and Woolf 'probably read' *Oroonoko* (Goldman 2007 75). She also implicitly aligned the notorious 'fine negress' in *A Room of One's Own* both with 'a dog' (*AROO* 39) and with Behn's 'fine' enslaved Imoinda (Behn 83, 109, 110) and the 'fine' Oroonoko himself (Behn 81), a man who 'die[s] like a dog' (Behn 140), as Goldman observes (2007 75). The term 'fine' here is complex, another textual hotspot, which gestures towards the verification and value of enslaved people by enslavers. The term also emerges from the discourse of art history and the use of such discourse in 'a long tradition of white women's travel narratives' as an appraisal of 'black women' as aesthetic objects (Jane Marcus 2004 39). Woolf then points to white women's complicity in the objectification, and often canine aestheticization of 'black' bodies. We saw, too, that the narrator of Woolf's polemic wears a 'collar' (*AROO* 4). Woolf was evidently aware of the discursive connections between dogs, collars, racialisation, and slavery. Woolf's dog tropes in *Flush: A Biography* are also subtly racialised, begging the question of whether, as Goldman puts it, 'such tropes *can* be turned to advantage' (2007 80).

4.3.2 'the strict bonds of family'

In my close analysis of the manuscript drafts of *Flush: A Biography*, I have found that Woolf writes of Flush's 'race' twelve times in *FMS*1 and not at all in the published version, where

she replaces the word 'race' with terms such as 'breed,' 'family,' and 'kind.' The word for breed and race is the same in French (*race*) and German (*Rasse*), and these terms were synonymous in eugenicist discourse as we have seen. In *FMS*1, Woolf writes of the 'race of Spaniels,' as a 'marked & adventurous race' (*FMS*1 153). She writes of the 'red cocker race,' the '~~race~~ of greyhounds & spaniels,' and 'bull dogs, mastiffs, sheep dogs, & other races' (*FMS*1 121). These dogs share 'the imagination of [Flush's] whole race' (*FMS*1 97). But 'race' (that is, breed) is also regulated. The 'Spaniel Club which regulated the race, & kept its ranks pure,' abhorred 'a topknot, or […] a light nose […] light eyes […] curled ears,' which were 'fatal' (*FMS*1 159). Indeed, 'any dog who exhibited these faults […] his offspring was denied the {privileges} of his *race*++ ~~hierarchy of his *race*~~' and 'was not allowed to perpetuate them' (emphases added *FMS*1 159). The crossed-through 'hierarchy of his race' makes explicit what the repeated references to dog 'races' implies: that race is a hierarchical classificatory construct, rather than a description of naturally occurring differences. In the first published edition, however, race is alluded to, rather than named. Woolf's reference, for example, to 'light eyes' and the purity of breeding, for Snaith, 'evokes a language of racial superiority reminiscent of fascist ideas concerning anti-Semitism and Nordic superiority' (Snaith 2002 630), but, I would add, also evokes Darwin's breeding analogies in his eugenicist passages from *The Descent of Man*. Snaith says that Woolf mocks theories of racial superiority in the first edition by 'relating them to dogs' (631). If Woolf's 'repeated references to breeding, purity, mongrels, and hierarchies of species' in the first edition are explicit and 'politically charged' (Snaith 2002 629) then they are even more so in *FMS*1.

In the first published edition of *Flush: A Biography*, Woolf tends to use the term 'family,' to refer to canine breeds (she does so three times) and human families (she does so sixteen times), a species-neutral term that blurs human-animal boundaries. [41] She uses the terms 'kind' (on ten occasions) and 'breed' or 'bred' (on eleven occasions) to refer to both

[41] See canine breeds (*F* 7, 9, 12) and human families (*F* 11, 12, 21, 56, 59, 73, 74, 89, 94, 112, 127, 131, 137, 140, 152, 158).

dogs and humans, rather than using the word race.[42] We see in *FMS*1 (emphases added for all examples), that 'the *race* of Spaniels established itself early in England' and the '*race* of Spaniels was in existence – the Long before the great families of England had emerged' (155). In the first edition, this becomes: 'His *family* was held in honour before those of many famous monarchs' (*F* 9). The 'marked and adventurous *race'* (153) of spaniels in the *FMS*1 becomes 'a dog of value and reputation' in the first edition (9). In *FMS*1 'any dog who exhibited these faults […] was denied the {privileges} of his *race* ++~~hierarchy of his *race*~~' (159), while in the first edition, 'the spaniel who persists in perpetuating topknots and light noses is cut off from the privileges and emoluments of his *kind*' (11). Finally, '~~tray~~ who was presumably the direct ~~ancestor of Flush~~ + red cocker *race* was firmly established' (*FMS*1 167) becomes, '[Flush] was directly descended from Tray (c. 1816), whose points' 'prove him to have been a *red cocker spaniel of merit'* (*F* 14). It is interesting to consider why Woolf does not use the word race in the first edition, but any answer to this is speculative. Perhaps she or Leonard, who edited her work, were aiming for a more subtle critique of fascism and eugenics when revising her manuscripts. Perhaps she wished to shift the emphasis from race to class, a topic I discuss below. Regardless of Woolf's intentions, excising the word race from the early manuscript for the first published edition maintains the effect of blurring human and canine boundaries, but without the explicit (ambiguously satirical) racialisation of dogs and working-class people.

That 'race' was a heavily freighted word after Darwin needs a little explaining. The term 'race' was not entirely interchangeable with the terms family, kind, and breed, at the time Darwin and Woolf were writing. Race had been associated with scientific racism (which incorrectly assumes a biological basis for distinguishing races) since at least the 1800s. It may go as far back as the mid-1700s when philosophers and scientists rejected the Biblical 'family of mankind' and began zoological analyses of human races (Kidd 9, 95).

[42] See 'Kind' (*F* 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 75, 78, 131, 137, 160) and 'breed' or 'bred' (*F* 11, 12, 13, 14, 19, 33, 75, 78, 89, 106, 131).

Before Darwin, thinkers had disagreed about whether each race had a distinct origin – as in the polygenism of Henri de Boulainvilliers (1658-1722), Lord Kames (1696-1782), Karl Linnaeus' *Systema Naturae* (1769), and Georges Cuvier (1769-1832) – or were all descended from one common race, as monogenists like Robert Boyle (1627-1691), the Comte de Buffon (1707-1788), and Johann Blumenbach (1752-1840) argued. In Darwin's time, Louis Agassiz argued that there was a scientific basis for 'eight primordial human types' (*Descent* 'Introduction' xxix). Meanwhile, Darwin's contemporary Herbert Spencer, who first coined the phrase 'survival of the fittest,' reasoned that 'human societies, like biological species, operate according to the principles of natural selection' (Rutledge 244). Spencer believed 'racial conflict was the key to social progress' (Rutledge 244) because it involved superior races 'exterminati[ng] inferior varieties' (Spencer qtd in Rutledge 244). Notions of racial superiority and inferiority were 'given scientific legitimacy and credence' following Darwin's work (Rutledge 243). The term 'race,' then, unlike the terms family, kind, and breed, was loaded with the associations of scientific racism. Woolf's excision of the word 'race' from *Flush: A Biography* suggests a keen awareness of these associations, and the effect is more subtle than *FMS*1 – racial analogies and signification are implied rather than explicitly stated.

Woolf celebrates the mongrelisation of dogs (and by association, of humans) in a slippery satirical move that challenges and reinforces the discursive alignment of mutts and racial others. Prior to living with Barrett Browning, Flush had mated **'**with a lady of +his own kind+ quality' (*FMS*1 119), 'Mr. Partridge's spaniel' (*F* 146) in the first edition.[43] While interbreeding native with exotic stock was a familiar practice to British animal breeders, especially horses and sheep, this practise did not apply to pedigree dogs. While Flush was living in London, in an *FMS*1 passage excised from later drafts, 'the Spaniel Club would never have countenanced an alliance' with a 'King Charles Spaniel,' and 'Nature had

[43] I cannot find mention of this bitch in Mitford's or Barrett Browning's letters.

effectually' prevented all but the 'most perfunctory intercourse between Flush & Catiline the bloodhound' (*FMS*1 119). Flush, then, desired other dog breeds before he moved to Italy. Indeed, while rank underpins London society, in Italy, in the first edition, 'there were no ranks' (*F* 105), and rank is exposed as an 'entirely arbitrary set of values' (Snaith 2002 631). In another suggestive excised passage from *FMS*1, Flush could 'scarcely be blamed if in the circumstances he gave way, on Wilson gave way. on Mrs Browning gave way; if he felt bubble up in him those {sensual} impulses,' for Flush had 'inherited, through his Spanish ancestors, some of the Latin amorosity which is never found,' in British dogs (*FMS*1 121).[44] Both excised passages offer a deceptively comical canine erotics (perhaps the reason for their excision) which challenges breeding hierarchies, and celebrates multispecies intimacy, mongrelisation, and by association, miscegenation. As Snaith puts it, 'Woolf celebrates impurity and hybridity' (2002 631) in the first edition, and this is also, indeed especially, true of *FMS*1.

The result in either version is both a clear, (r)evolutionary rejection of systems that rank breeds – and implicitly races – and practice eugenics, and a slippery figurative move. Woolf satirises discourse which considers dog breeds synonymous with human races, but risks reinforcing such discourse to the less careful reader, in her celebration of 'a society of mongrels' (*FMS*1 113). Her discursive canine contact zones are fraught with the risks of satirical racialised troping. Furthermore, she celebrates (in the passage quoted above) the racialised, animalised mongrelisation of language itself, when she writes in 'Craftsmanship' (1937) a few years later that:

> Royal words *mate* with commoners. English words marry French words, German words, Indian words, Negro words, if they have a fancy. Indeed, the less we enquire into the past of our dear Mother English the better it will be for that

[44] cf. genealogy and adultery in Byron's *Don Juan*, canto 1.

lady's reputation. For she has gone a-roving, a-roving fair maid (emphasis added *E*6 96).

Like Flush, the amorosity of the English language is beastly (mating like an animal), racialised (enjoying miscegenation), and hybrid. But, as the morganatic phrase 'Royal words mate with commoners' suggests, class is equally, if not more so, discursively connected to British pedigree than race, particularly if we think about Burke's *Peerage*, discussed in chapter two. Indeed, the phrase may allude to king Edward VIII's morganatic courtship with Wallis Simpson from 1931 which led to the 1938 abdication crisis. Race and class are interconnected issues in beastly eugenic discourse.

4.3.3 Class and Slums

In this section, I further complicate this notion of the 'anti-racist' signifying dog by looking at the animalisation and racialisation of the working-classes in *Flush: A Biography*, considering Woolf's complicity in perpetuating the racialised classist discourse which her work challenges. We shall see that sometimes Woolf grants subject status to dogs but not to racialised, animalised humans living in the East End slums in her 'Whitechapel' chapter. Woolf's depictions of class are slippery and beastly in both *FMS*1 and the first edition. It is worth revisiting the early manuscript to see how Woolf's slums transform from explicitly and viscerally bestialising in *FMS*1, to a slightly more subtle and Darwinian animalisation in the first edition.

Woolf consistently aligns working-class people in the East End slums with animals, particularly in *FMS*1. She uses bestializing language in *FMS*1, writing that the people in these slums (who dognap Flush) 'live like beasts,' and 'roost here' (25, 59), while Flush is afraid of the 'half naked drunken creature who cursed him' (75). These zoomorphic phrases do not appear in the first edition. In *FMS*1, Woolf aligns the women in the slums with dogs;

they ‘heaved themselves off the floor where they had lain among sacks all night & staggered off to *fetch* ~~pots~~ of beer *for their masters*’ (emphasis added 75) whereas in the first edition these women ‘fetch beer’ (*F* 81) but do not have masters. In both versions, however, Flush is terrorised by the ‘claw’ (*FMS*1 61), ‘the black paw of Shoreditch’ (*FMS*1 67), and the thieves who ‘pawed and clawed’ (*F* 80) at him. But in the first edition, animality is ambiguous, ‘[s]omething sprawled on the floor — whether beast or human being, he could not tell’ (*F* 78). In both the *FMS*1 and the first edition the animalization of these Londoners is exacerbated by their proximity to livestock. They live alongside cows ‘two in each seven feet of space’ (*FMS*1 65, *F* 73). In *FMS*1 the cows ‘were killed there too; & the diseased meat was eaten & the diseased milk drunken by the poor’ (65), while Woolf uses a less visceral description (with ‘disease’ implied rather than explicit and repeated) in the first edition: ‘the cows were milked and killed and eaten under the bedroom’ (73). In both the *FMS*1 and the first edition, the living conditions in the slums are appalling. The tenements have ‘broken windows’ (*FMS*1 25, *F* 83), the people ‘scarcely had food for themselves,’ and children drink ‘stagnant water green with putrescent scum’ (*FMS*1 67) in ‘a bright-green stream’ (*F* 74). These conditions allow Woolf’s narrator to animalise those living there.

Woolf blurs these beastly living conditions with being beastly. She equates the poor with vermin infestations. In *FMS*1: ‘innumerable families,’ she says, ‘swarmed over […] rotten and insanitary slums’ (59). She describes them ‘swarming, populating, breeding,’ they ‘seethed & {raged}, died & bred, the lowest of the poor,’ in a ‘seething ~~mass~~ +swarm+, ~~or a vast~~ swarm of lawless, penniless, untaught, starving, ~~po~~ breeding, ~~dif~~ diseased, men & women’ (*FMS*1 65). In the first edition, these people ‘seethed’ (75) and ‘swarmed’ (75) too, where ‘vice and poverty breed vice and poverty’ (89). It is unclear here, whether the narrator’s disgust is satirical, directed solely at these living conditions, or extends to those living in the slums. This scene reads like a Malthusian nightmare, and such ‘swarming’ and ‘breeding’ in poverty was certainly abhorrent to Galton and Darwin. Woolf names Thomas

Beames as her source for these slum scenes (*F* 73). His *The Rookeries of London: Past, Present, and Prospective* (1850) uses the words 'swarm' (124, 130, 151) and 'race' (96, 143, 150) to describe the poor, which she evidently reproduces across different versions of *Flush: A Biography*. Beames does not, however, use the words 'paw,' 'claw,' or 'breed' to refer to humans, nor say that they live like beasts or creatures. Woolf appears to build on Beames's work with further animalising, Darwinian, eugenic language. Moreover, although it may be marginally less bestialising than *FMS*1, the first edition of *Flush: A Biography* seems to allude more directly to Darwin's proto-eugenicist comments about how 'the weak members of civilised societies propagate their kind' (*Descent* 159), when Woolf writes that in Whitechapel 'poverty and vice and misery had bred and seethed and *propagated their kind* for centuries without interference' (emphasis added *F* 75). The narrator here invokes Darwin's beastly eugenicist views to ambiguous effect, both challenging such views through satire, and, as the satire is somewhat ambivalent, appearing to sympathise with them.

4.3.4 Race and Animality in the Slums

The animalized poor are also racialized. The clearance of the East End slums in the 1830-1840s was justified by 'racial metaphors to describe class distinctions, linking the East End and Africa' (Snaith 2002 623). Meanwhile the Fascist groups campaigning in the area claimed the Jewish population was racially inferior (Snaith 2002 627). Woolf would have known that those in the East End were 'often connected by analogy […] to other species,' Snaith argues, and that the area was thought to have produced 'menageries of sub-races of men and women' (Greenslade 38) whose existence threatened 'to bring about the degeneration of the British race' (Snaith 2002 624). This language evokes Darwin's 'sub-species' (*Descent* 210) and his 'degeneration of a domestic race' (159). Snaith argues that by 'attributing the 'bestial' view of Whitechapel in the published version of *Flush: A Biography* to an aristocratic *dog*, Woolf exposes the ridiculousness of the[se] hierarchies'

(original emphasis Snaith 2002 624). Woolf also, however, reinforces this racialized rhetoric even as she exposes it, I argue, particularly regarding the working classes in *FMS*1, when her irony becomes ambiguous.

In *FMS*1, Woolf writes that 'Flush ~~saw~~ the again the rough faces of his enemies – the *black cruel men* who had snatched him' (emphasis added *FMS*1 75), and in *FMS*2 describes the 'black hand of the Rookery' (*FMS*2 [66]), an area filled with 'bare black feet' (*FMS*2 [71]).[45] These lines were excised from later versions of *Flush: A Biography*.[46] Stuart Clarke, in 'The '"Increasing" Black Population in Virginia Woolf's Fiction' (2011) argues that 'Woolf often used "black" to mean "dressed in black," not a race called black' (33). This seems both unlikely and closes down the range of readings available for the frequently multivalent words in Woolf's work. The word black might also refer to the dirt, or the darkness of the room Flush is held in, or even to the men's characters: the term 'black' includes connotations of being 'wicked; iniquitous; foul, hateful' (*OED* Online) and Woolf, for example, calls the racially white Mr. Barrett 'the blackest, the most formidable of elderly men' (*F* 43). Alternatively, I argue that Woolf may be suggesting that these men are, or are like, men racialized as black, keeping all of the above options in play.

Furthermore, Clarke's aim, to 'prevent readers from populating Woolf's fiction with Africans and Asians who are not actually there' is based on the erroneous suggestion that there was little racial diversity in Britain before the 1950s (32, 33). In fact, as Jeffrey Green demonstrates in *Black Edwardians* (1998), this was not the case, with 'Britain's widespread population of African birth or descent' living not only in London, but places including Scarborough (a key setting in *Jacob's Room*), and Cornwall, where Woolf spent childhood holidays, long before the 1950s (Green xiii). The few extant discussions of Woolf and 'black' people focus on Woolf's 'fine negress' passage in *A Room of One's Own* (Carr, Goldman 2007, Hovey, Jane Marcus 2004), and on her controversial blackface exploits in

[45] I am using Jane Goldman's draft pagination for the forthcoming Cambridge edition of *Flush: A Biography*.
[46] I was unable to consult the *Atlantic* serialised version due to lockdown restrictions.

the 1910 Dreadnought Hoax and 1911 Post-Impressionist Ball (Seshagiri). Post-colonial readings of Woolf's work primarily focus on her (anti)imperialism (for example Jane Marcus 2004 and Phillips 1994), South American colonialism in *The Voyage Out* (Wollaeger), her use of Orientalist and Anglo-Indian discourse, and her family's extensive imperial connections.[47] Little has been said about her 'black' characters.

I hope to show that blackness is far more prevalent in Woolf's works than previously recognised and is intimately connected, in *Flush: A Biography,* with questions of class, animality, and eugenics. Woolf's writing features several minor 'black' characters, a term which has been used to describe 'a member of any dark-skinned group of peoples' for hundreds of years (*OED* Online). Woolf's 'black' characters include, in *The Voyage Out*, 'the old black man with a cloth round his loins' whom the European characters consider an 'inconvenience' and a 'savage' (263), while one white character imagines the Greeks 'as naked black men' (125). In *Jacob's Room*, Jacob mistakes a rock on the beach for a 'large black woman' whom he calls Nanny, and later watches a 'black woman with the dancing feather in her hat' storm out of a restaurant (7, 109). I will discuss the 'black, but enchanting' woman Peter Walsh follows in *Mrs Dalloway* in the next chapter (45). In *Orlando: A Biography*, Orlando sees a 'black man' in a street theatre performance 'waving his arms' (52), while Shelmerdine is 'trapped' in a relationship 'by a black woman' (*O* 235). In *Between the Acts*, a reporter observes a 'black man in fuzzy wig' on stage (163), an actor playing a policeman proclaims that 'black men; white men' all 'obey the rule of my truncheon' (145), and a 'stout black lady' watches in the audience (79). Meanwhile, Flush

[47] See for example Chaudhuri, Clif, Cohen, Doyle, Hickman, Hovey, Laurence, McVicker 2003, 2004, Pearson, Sarker (2012), Seshagiri, and Winston. Woolf's great-grandfather James Stephen (1758-1832) was an abolitionist in the West Indies; her grandfather Sir James Stephen (1789-1859) was Counsel to the Colonial Board of Trade; her father (1832-1904) immortalized colonisers in his *DNB*; her aunt Julia Cameron (1815-1879) was born in India; Woolf's cousin Dorothea Stephen (1871-1965), a Christian missionary in India, wrote *Studies in Indian Thought* (1919) (Seshagiri 62). Leonard Woolf (1880-1969) was a colonial administrator in Sri Lanka. Woolf's mother was born in India to Anglo-Indian parents and Woolf probably had Bengali ancestry on her mother's side (Dalrymple np).

hears ‘black men crying “Span! Span!”’ (*F* 57) (more on this below); *The Waves* includes a ‘long room with black men pulling ropes’ in a hospital (*W* 90), and Woolf records ‘those stout black women who sit in the door knitting’ (*D*4 154) in her diary. Woolf’s ‘black’ characters then, are varied. They are performers, viewers, lovers, servants, workers, ‘savages,’ cosmopolitans. My concern here is with blackness in *Flush: A Biography*.

Clarke is one of the few scholars to discuss these characters, but he does so in order to dismiss most of them as white despite the possibility, even the more obvious reading, that they are racialised as black (33-34). Most scholars, however, often only mention these ‘black’ characters in passing. Carr cites Woolf’s ‘lean black widow’ (in this case probably a woman of any race in mourning dress) and her ‘black men; white men’ as evidence of Woolf’s anti-imperialism, without discussing the race of the widow or men (199, 204). Karri Kaivola argues that Woolf uses the term ‘negresses’ as an androgynous metaphor for ‘deviant sexual proclivities’ (253) in *Orlando: Biography*. The fact that this scholarship is not extensive may be because, as Urmila Seshagiri explains, ‘Woolf’s interests in racial identity are nowhere as explicit or well-developed as her interests in the politics of gender, war, class, or education’ (59), and Woolf’s ‘critique of the Empire is self-reflexive, focused on imperialism's damage to England rather than to subject-nations’ (61). Nonetheless, Woolf’s representations of ‘black’ people calls for further attention if we are to better understand her ‘black cruel men’ in the manuscript versions of *Flush: A Biography*, and her relationship with race, empire, and eugenics more broadly.

My racialized reading of the ‘black cruel men’ in *Flush: A Biography* changes how we think about Woolf’s later comments on this ‘~~savage population~~’ (*FMS*1 63) in the slums, a phrase excised from the first edition and later versions of the manuscript. Woolf also invokes ‘black’ men in the first edition of *Flush: A Biography*: his ancestral memories ‘of forests and parrots and wild trumpeting elephants’ (*F* 37) seem to reach back to Africa and include ‘black men crying “Span! Span!”’ (*F* 57). But in *FMS*1 her allusions to ‘black’

people are more bestial. She writes of the slum inhabitants: 'these men & women – but they were more like apes & chimpanzees in their rags, in their {nakedness}' (*FMS*1 73). Apes have long been synonymous with people of African (and Irish) heritage in racist discourse and in the biological racism that emerged after Darwin. Apes were also central to the 'Gorilla Wars' that followed the publication of *On the Origin of Species*, during which the Darwinists sought to prove our neurological similarities with apes in the face of vehement opposition (*Descent* xxxv). While Woolf's allusions to Africa in the first edition are inoffensive, it is unclear whether Woolf's savage and simian references in *FMS*1 here are satirical or not. It would clearly be satire if, for example, her references were sustained and arch, rather than singular and, in the case of the simian references, bracketed by dashes. Woolf risks reinforcing racist discourse in her ambiguous satire, where it is easy to be 'oblivious to Woolf's irony' (Cuddy-Keane 151), if indeed Woolf *is* being ironic. It seems that Woolf, particularly in *FMS*1, reinforces and reinscribes the very racialized bestialisation of the poor that she challenges in *Flush: A Biography*. This may be why these 'black cruel men' were excised from 1933 version. In any case, it seems that Woolf's racialised, dog-like working class, juxtaposed as they are with a racialised dog in the extant drafts, complicates the suggestion that Woolf's canine signifier is anti-racist. Perhaps we might instead think of the signifying dog as (anti)racist and (anti)classist, both challenging and, where her satire become ambiguous, reinforcing the animalisation of a racialised working class. This very animalisation and racialisation, as we have seen, was used to justify the eugenicist clearance of the East End of the 'weak members' of our 'kind' (*Descent* 159). Woolf's beastly anti-eugenicist troping is more problematic than Snaith suggests.

4.3.5 'the blood of the slave!'

Finally, while we are on questions of race, it is worth considering Barrett Browning's and Woolf's family connections to miscegenation, itself a racist term. Barrett Browning, as her

biographer Julia Markus argues (Marjorie Stone has disputed the claim), 'believed she had African blood through her grandfather Charles Moulton' (106). Moulton was a Jamaican plantation owner and enslaver whose father 'veritably owned the North side of Jamaica – including Barrett Town' and profited 'on the back of close to ten thousand slaves' (Markus 99). Interracial rape was frequent and well-known in Jamaica at the time and several of Barrett Browning's relatives had children with enslaved women. Indeed, Barrett Browning was aware that her grandfather's will was challenged by six illegitimate contesters, four of them biracial (Markus 100-102). Barrett Browning was often called 'dark,' 'black' and 'brown' (Markus 107), by herself and others, and Markus suggests that her father's refusal to let his children marry or have children was motivated by a fear that their children would be visibly biracial (105). In one of Barrett Browning's anti-slavery poems, 'The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point' (1848), an enslaved woman raped by a slaveholder has a biracial child resembling him. Barrett Browning was evidently keenly aware of such crimes and that she herself was perhaps descended from such a union. She wrote to Robert Browning (20 December 1845) – and we know Woolf read these letters – telling him her 'true' surname, Moulton, and writing that she wished for 'some purer lineage than that of the blood of the slave! – Cursed we are from generation to generation!' (Barrett Browning 1913 345). While some critics have read this as a condemnation of her family's involvement in slavery (Karlin 51), Markus suggests that such readings simply highlight the academy's unwillingness to accept 'the most obvious explanation': Barrett Browning's African ancestry (Phelan 261). Barrett Browning appears to have been anxious about miscegenation in her poetry and perhaps her own family.

Whether or not Woolf accepted this obvious explanation, she certainly knew from Barrett Browning's poems and letters of her preoccupation with slavery and miscegenation. Woolf would also have learned from the letters that the Barretts made their fortune on Jamaican plantations. In one letter (June 4, 1846), Barrett Browning wrote of her 'great great

grandfather, who flogged his slaves' in Jamaica and 'adopted' a female 'favourite' (Barrett Browning 1969 759). Bearing this in mind, Woolf's use of racially charged language, across different iterations of *Flush: A Biography*, takes on a whole new aspect. Examples include twenty-six uses of the word chain (including 'chained' and 'chains' and predominantly referring to Flush's leash) in the first edition,[48] a significant increase from the seven uses of the word in *FMS*1;[49] and eight uses of the word collar in the first edition[50] where there are none in *FMS*1; along with the references, especially in *FMS*1 to 'black' people. We might now read these as gesturing towards Barrett Browning's anxieties regarding miscegenation and her roots in the plantations as both the descendant of slave holders and potentially of an enslaved woman. Likewise, the excised *FMS*1 passage regarding disinherited biracial bastards may allude to the disinheritance of the biracial Barretts. Furthermore, the chapter about Flush's kidnap in the slums was titled 'The Rape' in *FMS*1, which might gesture towards the rape of enslaved people and consequent miscegenation in Barrett Browning's ancestry.

Finally, according to Woolf's cousin, the historian William Dalrymple, Woolf had biracial Bengali heritage via her maternal grandmother Maria Pattle (1818–1892), who 'used to speak Bengali' with her sister Sophia Pattle (Dalrymple 2016 np). Sophia was painted by George Frederic Watts with a rakhi – a Hindu sacred thread – tied round her wrist (Dalrymple 2016 np; see also Sarker 2018 90). Neither of these facts prove that they were partly Bengali, but their ancestor Maria Monica, who had changed her name when she converted to Catholicism, was from what is now Chandannagar, India (Dalrymple 2016 np). We do not know if Woolf knew about her. While being descended from an Indian colonial subject is very different from being descended from an enslaved Jamaican, Woolf may have been thinking about miscegenation in Barrett Browning's family and/or her own when writing

[48] *F* 19, 30, 31, 32, 33, 36, 63, 64, 72, 76, 77, 78, 95, 96, 106, 110, 111, 130, 131, 132, 133.
[49] *FMS*1 21, 61, 67, 103, 159.
[50] *F* 30, 32, 33, 35, 79 128, 133.

Flush: A Biography. Furthermore, if we consider *Flush: A Biography* as a restaging of *Orlando A Biography*, then Woolf's discussion of miscegenation may be connected to Sackville-West's preoccupation with her gypsy blood (see chapter two). In any case, allusions to slavery, blackness, and Woolf's celebration of mongrelisation (which gestures towards miscegenation) seem grounded in an awareness of Barrett Browning's connections to and views on slavery and miscegenation. It is worth bearing this in mind when we read *Flush: A Biography* if we are to better understand Woolf's concerns in this book with race and racism.

Section 4.4 Tyranny and Sympathy

4.4.1 Moral Sense

We have seen that Woolf exposes and reinscribes various racialised and eugenicist discourses of control in *Flush: A Biography*. The novel, Snaith argues, 'illuminates the ways in which she approached fascism […] as an extension of extreme version of other kinds of tyranny' (2002 633). Woolf is far less ambiguous in challenging, through Darwin's concept of sympathy, the oppression of white women under patriarchy discussed here, and dogs in the sciences (discussed in the following section) than of racialised, classed people. The layers of oppression in *Flush: A Biography* include housebound invalid Barrett Browning 'under the tyranny of her father' (and by association his enslaver forefathers), and her maid Wilson under the 'equally as oppressive tyranny of Barrett Browning' (Snaith 2002 620). I want to focus on the tyranny of Mr. Mitford and Robert Browning. Dogs and male tyrants often feature at the site of female creativity in Woolf's works – music in *The Voyage Out*, painting in *To the Lighthouse*, writing in *A Room of One's Own* – as Goldman has shown (2007, 2010a, 2010b, 2011, 2013). These male characters 'den[y] women subjectivity, authorial and artistic' (Goldman 2007 55). One mode of resistance to such tyranny in *Flush: A Biography* is writing (by Mitford and Barrett Browning) prompted by the 'the all-important

emotion of sympathy' (*Descent* 129), which emerges in (r)evolutionary word-making and 'world-making entanglements' at interspecies canine 'contact zones' (Haraway 2008 4).

The concept of sympathy was central to Darwin's understanding of the moral sense and social instincts. We have seen that the 'the all-important emotion of sympathy' – rather than *logos* – was the 'primary impulse and guide' (*Descent* 129, 145) of humans and animals, from which the 'moral sense' evolved (121). Sympathy was also central to the various versions of *Flush: A Biography*, with the words sympathy or sympathetic occurring thirteen times in *FMS*1 and ten times in the first book edition. In *FMS*1, both Flush and Barrett Browning, **'**felt ~~that~~ a sympathy which […] none can ~~analyse~~ […] And this sympathy was to be tested' (*FMS*1 9). Likewise, in the published version Woolf writes:

> Spaniels are by nature sympathetic; Flush, as his story proves, had an even excessive appreciation of human emotions. The sight of his dear mistress […] excited him to gambols whose wildness was half sympathy with her own delight (*F* 15-16).

Woolf adds that 'he came to dislike barking and biting; he came to prefer […] human sympathy to either' (*F* 45). Flush then, from the earliest draft, is full of (r)evolutionary Darwinian sympathy, particularly for Barrett Browning, which she reciprocates. This sympathy, I will show, encourages an 'ethic of flourishing' (Haraway 2003 54). I will focus predominantly on *FMS*1 which gives accounts of sympathy and tyranny excised from, or heavily edited in, the first edition.

In *FMS*1, Mary Russell Mitford bonds with Barrett Browning through sympathy, a love of dogs, and shared experience of tyrannous fathers. In first edition of *Flush: A Biography*, Woolf writes that Mitford, 'had to read aloud to her father hour after hour; then to play cribbage; then, when at last he slumbered, to write and write and write […] to pay

their bills and settle their debts' (*F* 15). In *FMS*1, however, these lines are focalised through Mitford, giving her a stronger voice in the narrative. Her frustration is greater and more explicit here. Unlike her father, Mitford observes, dogs:

> do not play cribbage; nor want me to read aloud eight hours a day; nor moan when I have to leave them in order to write; nor require that I shd. sit eight or twelve hours scribbling scribbling for his benefit: dogs do not gamble, swear, ~~or go~~ & when ill times come upon us, they will always fetch a few pounds, whereas ~~the~~ a father can adopt the rather {ingenious} view that it is quite unnecessary for him to seek employment when he has a daughter who can write (*FMS*1 173).

Mr. Mitford's lack of sympathy for his daughter reveals him to be not only more monstrous than he appears in later versions, but less sympathetic, and so less morally evolved, than Flush the dog. Furthermore, Mary Russell Mitford becomes 'specially devoted,' to Barrett Browning who 'returned' her 'devotions […] by letting her come, by listening to her […] reading her letters & answering them' (*FMS*1 175). These somewhat Sapphic devotions (perhaps the reason for their excision) are absent from later versions of the narrative which minimise Mitford's role. Barrett Browning and Mitford sympathise with each other's lives under the tyranny of their 'old reprobate' fathers, each 'a match' for the other (*FMS*1 175). Miss Barrett 'thought how very much the two fathers, then the two daughters had in common; & therefore the thoughts of the two ladies were inevitably, naturally drawn to dogs' (*FMS*1 175-7). The two women unite against these patriarchs, through shared reading and writing, their love of dogs (who are more sympathetic than their fathers), and mutual (r)evolutionary Darwinian sympathy, which encourages an ethic of flourishing begun in multispecies canine contact zones.

4.4.3 Our Master

In *FMS*1, when Flush is dognapped, Barrett writes 'to her lover for sympathy,' certain Browning will 'not fail of sympathy' (77). Although he feels 'sorry for her' (77), his sympathy does not extend to animals:

> Robert Browning burst out, in anger, in indignation […] She had given these ruffians What they asked, had she! Such an explosion […] of wrath […] might have made a less resolute or less loving heart quail & give way. Many an invalid in the forties would have said after all my duty as a woman, soon to be a wife, is submission. In these matters, men are our master. Far from it. […] She accepted the argument; She took up the challenge – she seized her pen. […] Such were the forces that Flush had roused: love, reason, cupidity; the forces of civilisation against the forces of barbarity (*FMS*1 81).

Once again, injustice and a (r)evolutionary sympathy for dogs (*she* is dog-like, having a master) motivates her to raise her pen in defiance.

It is unclear whether the 'forces of barbarity' refers to London's racialised East End dog thieves, or Browning's lack of sympathy. The former is problematic, while the latter raises several ethical questions for Barrett Browning:

> should one submit to blackmail? How far should one adhere to abstract principles? Are abstract principles of more value than love? […] What about Flush's sufferings? What does one owe an animal trusted to ones [sic] care? What a wife? What a husband? (*FMS*1 83).

Just as Darwin describes sympathy and morality emerging from social instincts across generations of species, Woolf describes the development of Barrett Browning's morality in *FMS*1 from sympathetic, cross-species social instincts: from world-making entanglements with Flush. Where for Darwin, sympathy is the only thing standing between humanity and eugenics, for Woolf, sympathy can prompt a challenge to tyranny and discourses of control. Flush teaches us sympathy, Flush who 'could have barked in sympathy with Mr. Browning,' and who thinks (or barks) in the first person: 'I need all the things that you both need […] We are joined in sympathy' (*F* 70). The biographer-narrator in *FMS*1 asks if we will 'persist in our anthropomorphic delusion, that animals are merely extensions of our own ~~me~~ identity?' (199). For, 'the pride of man has given no more glaring proof of its monstrous egotism. The dog has no independent existence,' but is merely 'an additional organ for the expression of some human emotion' (*FMS*1 201). Woolf here anticipates Haraway, who wants 'to learn how to narrate this co-history and how to inherit the consequences of co-evolution in natureculture' (2003 12). Indeed, turning to listen to the unwritten lives of animals, Woolf identifies a call for sympathy, 'can almost hear them say […] see me as I am' (*FMS*1 201).

Section 4.5 Animal Sentience

4.5.1 Darwin and Vivisection

So, '[w]hat does one owe an animal trusted to ones care?' (*FMS*1 83). There are very real consequences to taking significant otherness, and animal sentience seriously, as Darwin and Woolf knew. Both were interested in animal welfare and vivisection in different ways. In the mid-1870s, as Paul White observes, 'following a series of graphic reports of experiments on live animals in the mainstream press, public concern over vivisection increased enormously' (2006 101), these animals – often dogs– were rarely anaesthetised (Feller 268). In 1874, for example, two dogs were made to have epileptic seizures at the public British Medical Association annual meeting; this demonstration sparked public outcry against

animal experiments (Feller 266). Darwin's theories about the similarities between human and animal emotions, discussed in *The Descent of Man* and *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, provided 'a scientific foundation for interspecies comparisons,' and appeared to justify the increased use of vivisection, on the 'principle that any discoveries made would be more or less applicable to humans' (Mayer 400). At the same time, Darwin's work on animal emotion and sympathy were key to *anti*-vivisection campaigns, which saw sympathy with animals as a sign of civilised progress, rejecting vivisection – particularly on dogs – as a cruel and unnecessary practise. Organisations including the Victoria Street Society (1875), the Society for the Abolition of Vivisection (1875), and the International Association for the Total Suppression of Vivisection (1876), emerged in Britain in response to this rise in vivisection. Indeed, there was a wider growth in animal welfare movements, with the formation of the Royal Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA 1824), the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB 1889), and the first legislation to protect birds in 1869. As Darwin scholar Jed Mayer argues, '[e]volutionary kinship played a central role, at this time, in the competing arguments regarding the legal and moral status of nonhuman animals' (391). Darwin's work on animal faculties raised questions about what we 'owe' animals.

Race has been a central concern of this chapter, and although Darwin and Woolf do not discuss race in relation to vivisection, it is worth pointing out that physiology and vivisection discourse is connected to questions of race in several respects. First, race, particularly 'blackness,' forms a 'primary matrix' (Boisseron 13) for approaching animal studies partly because it is an 'absent presence of much animal studies and animal liberation discourse' (Gossett np). Anti-vivisection campaigns drew on abolitionist discourse, with one British anti-vivisection magazine, established in 1898, called *The Abolitionist* (Boisseron 20). Second, Darwin was taught taxidermy (animal physiognomy, though not vivisection)

by John Edmonstone, a freed Guyanese slave based at the University of Edinburgh museum (Desmond and Moore 2009 19). Darwin recalled that Edmonstone:

> had travelled with [British naturalist Charles] Waterton, and gained his livelihood by stuffing birds, which he did excellently; he gave me lessons for payment and I often used to sit with him for he was a pleasant and intelligent man (*Autobiographies* 25).

Darwin's forty hours of study under Edmonstone (an often absent centre in Darwin studies) shaped his study of animals and therefore his theory of evolution. Third, unethical experiments including vivisection on humans have historically used people of colour as test subjects, in what Helen Tilley calls 'entangled experimental and imperial logics' (Tilley 495). Experimenting on enslaved peoples in the Caribbean and American South – for example injecting them with smallpox (Schiebinger 104) or performing experimental gynaecology operations without anaesthesia on enslaved women (Wailoo 1529) – was common in the 1800s. Indeed, 'human experimentation and the exploitation of enslaved bodies' was 'frequent, widespread and indeed commonplace' (Kenny 20). Racialised humans and animals, then, were both subject to live experimentation. Race (particularly blackness) is an absent presence in anti-vivisection discourse, Darwin's animal studies, and experiments on humans. As such, we should bear questions of race, as an absent presence, in mind when considering Darwin and Woolf's engagement with vivisection.

Darwin played a key role in debates for and against vivisection and drafted a bill on the issue. He felt that live animal experiments were necessary to advancements in physiology and should be independently regulated in order to prevent animal cruelty. As he wrote to zoologist E. R. Lankester, '[y]ou ask about my opinion on vivisection. I quite agree that it is justifiable for real investigations on physiology; but not for mere damnable and detestable

curiosity. It is a subject which makes me sick with horror' ('Letter to E. R. Lankester' 22 March 1871). He was in correspondence across the 1870s-1880s with those for and against vivisection, including scientists, activists, and politicians, and debated the topic with his family (his wife Emma and daughter Henrietta opposed vivisection).[51] His scientist correspondents in the 1870s-80s included surgeon James Paget, author of 'Vivisection: its pains and its uses' (1881); evolutionary biologist G. J. Romanes; physician P. H. Pye-Smith who was forming a vivisectionist association; and T. L. Brunton who was creating the Science Defence and Advancement Fund, to promote understanding around vivisection and protect investigators from anti-vivisectionists.[52] Darwin's *anti*-vivisectionist contacts included George Richard Jesse, founder of the Society for the Abolition of Vivisection (1875); W. von Voigts-Rhetz, anti-vivisection author (1881); Ann Marston, founder of the London Anti-vivisection Society; and the RSPCA.[53] He wrote to the latter with hopes that legislation might limit and regulate vivisection ('Letter to RSPCA' 3 May 1875).

4.5.2 Frances Power Cobbe

Perhaps Darwin's most significant anti-vivisectionist correspondent was Frances Power Cobbe (1822-1904) whom he met when they stayed in neighbouring holiday homes in Wales in June 1869 (*Decent of Man* 'Introduction' xlvii). Cobbe was a leading anti-vivisectionist and women's rights campaigner who wrote on religion and ethics, as well as 'doggie stories for the Cornhill' (Cobbe 'Letter to Charles Darwin' 26 Nov 1872), edited by Stephen.

[51] Darwin's vivisection correspondents included: the Conservative Home Secretary ('Letter to R. A. Cross' May 1875); a Liberal MP ('Letter to Edward Cardwell' 29 October 1875); the Royal Commission on vivisection ('Letter to Secretary of the Royal Commission on vivisection' 8 November 1875); a Conservative political hostess ('Letter to Mary Catherine Stanley' 22 December 1875); the editor of *The Times* ('Letter to the editor of *The Times*' 21 April 1881); his cousin ('Letter to Francis Galton' 4 November [1875]); brother ('Letter from Erasmus Avery Darwin' 8 July 1879); son ('Letter to Francis Darwin' 1 May 1876); son-in-law ('Letter to Richard Buckley Litchfield' 24 April 1875); and the editor of *Nature* ('Letter from John Scott Keltie' 24 September 1880).

[52] Darwin 'Letter to James Paget' 3 December 1881, 'Letter to G. J. Romanes' 4 November 1875, 'Letter to P. H. Pye-Smith' 21 December 1881, 'Letter to T. L. Brunton' 27 November 1881.

[53] Darwin 'Letter to George Richard Jesse' 21 April 1881, 'Letter to W. von Voigts-Rhetz' 14 May 1881, 'Letter to Ann Marston' 20 July [1879].

Darwin and Cobbe's 'horror' at vivisection was underpinned by their belief in, and sympathy for, the 'notorious' 'love of a dog for his master' (*Descent* 90). Darwin wrote:

> everyone has heard of the dog suffering under vivisection, who licked the hand of the operator; this man, unless the operation was fully justified by an increase of our knowledge […] must have felt remorse to the last hour of his life (*Descent* 90).

Darwin read Kant at Cobbe's recommendation (Cobbe 'Letter to Charles Darwin' 23 March 1870) and extended Kant's 'law in the soul,' the imperative 'ought,' to animals, as White points out (2013 123). Darwin writes, for example, that 'a pointer *ought* to point, and a retriever to retrieve game. If they fail to do so, they fail in their duty and act wrongly' (original emphasis *Descent* 140). He sent Cobbe a copy of *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (Cobbe 'Letter to Charles Darwin' 26 Nov 1872) and read her work, while Cobbe reviewed *The Descent of Man* in 'Darwinism in Morals,' published in the *Theological Review* (1871).

Darwin wrote to Cobbe, after reading her work on the emotional psychology of dogs in the *Quarterly Review*, 'your article […] seems to me the best analysis of the mind of an animal which I have ever read' ('Letter to F. P. Cobbe' 28 November 1872). He was 'particularly glad to read what you say about the reasoning power of dogs & […] their self-consciousness' ('Letter to F. P. Cobbe' 28 November 1872), and continued:

> One of the most interesting subjects in yr article seems to me to be about the moral sense. Since publishing the Descent of Man I have got to believe rather more than I did in dog's (sic) having what may be called a conscience. When an honourable dog has committed an undiscovered offence he certainly seems

> ashamed […] My dog, the beloved & beautiful Polly, is at such times extremely affectionate towards me ('Letter to F. P. Cobbe' 28 November 1872).

Darwin later, however, refused to sign Cobbe's anti-vivisection petition, writing, '[t]hat any experiment should be tried without the use of anaesthetics, when they can be used, is atrocious,' but explained, 'I could not sign [your] paper' as 'I believe that Physiology will ultimately lead to incalculable benefits, and it can progress only by experiments on living animals. Any stringent law would stop all progress in this country which I should deeply regret' ('Letter to F. P. Cobbe' 14 January 1875).[54] Darwin took work on either side of the vivisection debate very seriously, considering the topic fundamentally connected to canine consciousness and morality.

When he heard that Cobbe was presenting the anti-vivisectionist Henniker Bill to Parliament, Darwin drafted his own petition to 'protect animals & at the same time not to injure Physiology' ('Letter to J. D. Hooker' 14 April 1875) with his friend, botanist J. D. Hooker. Darwin's son-in-law Richard Litchfield, a barrister, drafted the bill with the encouragement of zoologist Thomas Henry Huxley and others ('Letter to J. D. Hooker' 14 April 1875). The two bills were similar. Cobbe's called for anaesthetics for vivisected animals, licenses for vivisectors, and fines for lawbreakers, and Darwin's did the same (without the licenses) whilst also aiming to restrict classroom vivisection demonstrations (Feller 266). The simultaneous presentation of these two bills in Parliament, neither of which received a consensus, led to the formation of the government's Royal Commission for Vivisection, to investigate the need for regulating vivisection (Feller 267).[55] The legislation created following the investigation was much like that outlined in the Henniker bill.

[54] Typewritten Copy. Hull University Archives, Hull History Centre (British Union for Anti-Vivisection archives: U DBV/25/1).
[55] See White 2006, 2011.

4.5.4 Woolf and Vivisection

At the 1875 Royal Commission on Experiments on Animals Darwin claimed he was 'fully convinced that physiology can progress only by the aid of experiments on living animals. I cannot think of any one step which has been made in physiology without that aid' (*Report of the Royal Commission* 234). Woolf could easily have read this claim in an article (8 July 1909) in the *Times* which mentions the Darwin Centenary Celebrations that she probably attended (Crichton-Browne 3, see chapter one). Two pieces on an International Anti-vivisection and Animal Welfare Congress of 1909 were printed on the same page, demonstrating that these issues were still well publicised in Woolf's lifetime, and there were frequent articles on the topic in *The Times.* Furthermore, Leslie Stephen argued in 'Thoughts of an Outsider: The Ethics of Vivisection' (*Cornhill Magazine* 1876), that the 'practice which is justifiable because implying laudable motives graduates imperceptibly into the practice which is execrable because implying sheer brutality' (1876 476). Stephen proposed constructing a strict laboratory regimen 'which may serve as a moral prophylactic' (1876 476) for vivisectors against the temptations of brutality. Woolf probably had some idea of Darwin's and Stephen's views on vivisection.

Woolf alludes to vivisection and laboratory animals across her works. These allusions are infrequent and often figures for other concerns, such as literary criticism and formal experimentation. The final issue of the *Hyde Park Gate News* (14 April 1895), her childhood family newspaper, featured a dialogue by Woolf in which an editor asks an author why she writes poetry rather than 'History – Philosophy – Womens (sic) Suffrage – Vivisection' (*HPGN* 200). Woolf owned books about dogs including 1920s publications by the anti-vivisectionist National Canine Defence League and *De Canibus Britannicus* (1576).[56] In *A*

[56] G. H. Bowker's *How to Keep a House Dog: A Practical Guide to his Housing, Feeding, Grooming, Exercising, and General Management, with Hints on Whelping, the Rearing of Puppies, Etc*. (nd); John Caius's *Of Englishe Dogges* (1880); the National Canine Defence League's *Dog Welfare: A Helpful Book on Dog Ailments* (nd); Margaret Flannery's *The Bob Martin Dog Book* (1956); Louis Sewell's *Canine Distemper: A Practical Handbook.* (1925) (King and Miletic-Vejzovic np).

Room of One's Own and *Flush: A Biography* Woolf invokes, as Goldman demonstrates (2010b, 2016), the antivivisection statue of the little brown dog erected in Battersea, London, 'a favourite haunt of Woolf's' (Goldman 2016 168). The statue and dog drinking fountain beneath memorialised a dog 'done to death in the laboratories of University College' (Mason 26), an institution to which women had only recently gained access. Battersea was then a 'hotbed' for 'trade unionism, republicanism, anti-colonialism, municipal socialism, Irish home rulers, suffragettes – and anti-vivisectionists' (Mason 24), and many of these groups united against vivisection. Medical students attacked the statue which was then given a police guard and rioting ensued (Goldman 2016 168). The little brown dog affair was national news, and Woolf would probably have known of the statue, which Goldman calls a site of 'gender, race and class war,' which was eventually destroyed (Goldman 2016 168).[57]

Flush perhaps gestures towards the little brown dog statue as he sleeps, 'beneath a statue, couched under the lip of a fountain' in Italy (*F* 136). Likewise, as he looks in the mirror Flush wonders, '[w]as not the little brown dog opposite himself? But what is "oneself"? Is it the thing people see?' – the vivisected victim or the laboratory specimen perhaps – 'Or is it the thing one is?' (*F* 46). This could also be a reference to Barrett Browning's letters where she writes to her classics teacher Hugh Stuart Boyd (June 22 1842) that Flush 'thinks there is a little brown dog inside every looking glass' (1898 vol. 1 np) and to Robert Browning (March 25 1846) of 'the brown dog in the glass' (1900 np) – which I discussed in the previous chapter. Woolf may have been referring to both the Little Brown Dog affair and Barrett Browning's letters. Either way, she raises the question – what is 'the thing one is,' or as Derrida puts it, *suis* (follows)? A potential actor in the dangerous contact zone of animal testing, perhaps, where 'oneself' becomes erased by the function one serves as a laboratory animal. As Flush operates as a racialised signifier, we might consider too how the 'oneself' of racialised *human* subjects is erased by their exploitation and

[57] It was rebuilt without the fountain in Battersea Park.

animalisation as test subjects, as enslaved labourers and as pets. Canine contact zones are dangerous, then, for dogs and their discursive synonyms, and as scholars following the animal turn in literary studies, we need to follow not simply what 'people see,' but pay attention to canine stories, to the 'oneself' of the dog, and to the elided racialised subjects that canine signifiers invoke.

In *Three Guineas* (1938), Woolf evokes a sheep vivisection. She quotes a newspaper report on an incident at the Royal College of Surgeons, Edinburgh, in 1869, when male medical students prevented female students from petitioning to lift the bar on women matriculating:

> "in front of the Royal College of Surgeons … Shortly before four o'clock … nearly 200 students assembled in front of the gate leading to the building …" the medical students howled and sang songs. "The gate was slammed in their [the women's] faces … Dr. Handyside found it impossible to begin his demonstration … a pet sheep was introduced into the room" (original ellipses *TG* 247).

The juxtaposition of this sheep vivisection and the gate closing on the women, as Woolf scholar Holly Henry puts it, aligns 'a scientific indifference to the suffering of a demonstration animal with an institutional indifference to women' (Henry 155). *Three Guineas*, Henry argues, is 'about experiments and scientific practises. It is in a sense a lab report' (Henry 153-4) of the Society of Outsiders and women's 'effective experiment[s] in the prevention of war' (*TG* 192).[58] Woolf, citing *The Times* and the *Daily Herald*, gives examples of outsider women whose experiments 'in opposition to scientific practises that exclude women and others' have been successful (Henry 154). These experiments include refusing 'to darn a sock' for the war effort, the 'very original experiment' of not accepting

[58] *A Room of One's Own* begs the question, whose liver are Chloe and Olivia mincing in their laboratory?

sports awards, and 'an experiment in passivity' (*TG* 329). Variants on the word experiment occur thirty-three times in *Three Guineas,* a text which is experimental in form, merging images, extensive quotation, epistle and essay. It was 'not science in general, but science rallied in support of aggression,' here towards animals and women, 'that Woolf wished to expose and resist' (Henry 155). Experimental (including literary) acts of resistance against practises of misogyny and animal cruelty – Woolf does not mention human experimentation, but we may follow her racialised dogs down such paths – are methods for opposing experiments and institutions which necessitate animal suffering and indifference to women.

Woolf also uses vivisection imagery in her writing as a figure for literary criticism. In 'How It Strikes a Contemporary' (1923), she writes that 'the too frequent result of [critics'] able and industrious pens is a desiccation of the living tissues of literature into a network of little bones' (*E*3 355). In 'The Anatomy of Fiction' (1919), her review of Clayton Hamilton's 'didactic' *Materials and Methods of Fiction*, Woolf is 'sickened' by his belief that 'every work of art can be taken to pieces, and those pieces can be named and numbered, divided and sub-divided, and given their order of precedence, like the internal organs of a frog' (*E*3 44-45). She adds sarcastically that 'you may dissect your frog, but you cannot make it hop; there is, unfortunately, such a thing as life' (*E*3 45). Desiccation and dissection are not the same as vivisection (which requires live subjects) but still invoke scientific interest in teasing apart animal bodily matter. The vivisected or dissected animal then, stands in for literature itself. Dissection is sickening because it does not pay attention to the life of literature, just as animal dissection does not pay significant attention to the life (or hop, or bark) of the animal subject.[59]

Indeed, the subject and life of literature in *Flush: A Biography* (in Mitford, Barrett Browning, and Woolf's writing) *is* an animal, or as Derrida would have it, *l'animot* (2002 409). Recall that for Derrida, the 'general singular' word 'animal' is a 'crime against

[59] See Wordsworth's 'The Tables Turned' (1798): 'We murder to dissect. / Enough of Science and of Art;' 131.

animals' because it 'applies to the whole animal realm with the exception of the human' (2002 416, 408, 409). His neologism *animot* phonetically mirrors the word *animaux* (animals), whilst incorporating the word *mot* (French for word), drawing attention to the linguistic act that separates the signifier from its signified, to the violence (even vivisection) done to animals by language. Derrida's *animot* brings together this self-reflexivity whilst gesturing towards 'the existence of 'living creatures' whose plurality cannot, paradoxically, be assembled within the single figure of an animality that is simply opposed to humanity' (2002 415). Woolf's literary *animot* and vivisected texts teach us to pay attention to the 'life' (*E*3 45) of animals and literature, and animals *in* literature, who cannot be assembled into a single, stable figure or trope. Furthermore, Woolf's (r)evolutionary *animot* raise questions about what we 'owe' (*FMS*1 83) significant (including but extending beyond canine) others, questions which are still pressing today.

4.5.6 Animal Sentience Today

The issue of animal mind and emotion, of who and what gets to count as an actor, is pressing today and has real world implications for animals around the globe. At present, the British government is, according to the House of Commons briefing on 'Animal Sentience and Brexit' (8 July 2019), 'reviewing the recognition of animal sentience and the need for UK legislation after Brexit' (Ares 1). This is because the EU Withdrawal Act (2018) does not confirm that Article 13 of the Lisbon Treaty (2007), which recognises that '*animals are sentient beings*' will be transferred into UK legislation (qtd and emphasised in Ares 1). The EU definition of animal sentience states that animals are 'capable of feeling pleasure and pain' (Ares 2). Future UK governments, having left the EU, may not treat animals as sentient beings. Indeed, in November 2017, MPs rejected a proposed amendment to include animal sentience in the EU Withdrawal Act, claiming that the UK Animal Welfare Act 2006 covered this issue. This Welfare Act, however, does not explicitly acknowledge animal sentience,

and does not apply to farm animals, racing horses and dogs, or laboratory animals. The British Government has responded to animal welfare concerns by drafting a bill on animal sentience, but the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee (DEFRA) recommended that the 'problematic concept' of animal sentience in this bill 'be better defined' in future drafts (Ares 1). The Government has since promised to 'ensure animal sentience is recognised after we leave the EU' (DEFRA consultation response 7 August 2018), but, at the time of writing, the legislation has not been finalised and there has been no update on the subject since July 2019.

The question of animal mind, emotion and welfare seems inexplicably open. The implications of not legally recognising animal sentience in the UK include the potential lowering of animal welfare standards overall, of returning to the terms of the 2006 Animal Welfare Act which do not apply to many animals, and the risk of establishing trade agreements with countries that export meat from low-welfare factory farms to sub-EU standards. This takes us away from a multi-species 'ethic of flourishing' (Haraway 2003 54) and towards its opposite. As Clare Palmer puts it in *Animal Rights* (2008), '150 years after Darwin, it is astonishing that we are so astonished that other animals may have characteristics thought to be uniquely human. The proposition that humans have mental characteristics,' such as sentience, 'wholly absent in nonhumans is inconsistent with the theory of evolution' (Palmer 434). Since Darwin, thinkers such as Woolf and Haraway have been teaching us to take significant otherness seriously, and it is more urgent than ever that we do so today.

I hope to have made the case for reading Woolf's *Flush: A Biography*, and the (r)evolutionary, (anti)racist signifying dog in Woolf's work, in the context of racist, classist, and eugenicist discourse in both the 1800s, through the lens of *The Descent of Man*, and the 1930s. Doing so enables us to see that although Woolf's signifying dog may turn misogynist canine tropes to feminist advantage – through cross-species Darwinian sympathy,

anticipating Haraway's 'ethics of flourishing' – she is nevertheless complicit reinforcing in the racism and classism that she challenges through ambiguous satire in the East End section of *Flush: A Biography*. Nonetheless, Woolf asks who and what gets to count as an actor, and takes canine significant otherness seriously, turning Darwin's dogs against the eugenicist views he outlines in *The Descent of Man*. She thus accepts the radical animal politics of evolutionary theory whilst rejecting the practise of unnatural selection of pedigree humans. Indeed, Woolf invites us to reject pedigree altogether: Flush 'carried his pedigree on his back. His coat meant to him what a gold watch inscribed with the family arms means to an impoverished squire' and as Browning cuts his fur away (to relieve him of mange), 'the insignia of the cocker spaniel fell to the floor' (*F* 127). Flush realises, in a rare instance of direct speech, '[y]ou are nothing,' but, 'to be nothing – is that not, after all, the most satisfactory state in the whole world?' (127-8). Finally, I have shown that Darwin and Woolf took animal rights seriously, leading me to discuss the stakes of recognising animal sentience and significant otherness today, as the UK revises animal welfare legislation. *Flush: A Biography* is urgent reading.

Chapter Five

Darwin and Woolf Write Feather Fashions, Sex and Extinction

Section 5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 Controversial Plumes

This chapter is the last in this thesis to focus on Woof's engagement with *The Descent of Man*, and shifts my focus generically from auto/biography, and tropologically from mammals, to Woolf's feminist polemics and other creatures: worms in my final chapter, and here, the chimeric feathered woman. Feather fashions were the subject of heated debate between the 1860s and 1920s, with feather-wearing women held largely accountable by anti-plumage trade campaigners for the devastation of exotic bird species. The UK Plumage (Prohibition) Bill of 1920, which sought to ban the importation of feathers used in women's fashion, was the subject of Woolf's 'earliest feminist polemic' (*E*3 'Introduction' xviii), her narrative essay 'The Plumage Bill,' which challenged the 'injustice to women' (*E*3 243) implicit in the language of the plumage trade debate. Extant criticism on the essay by Woolf scholars Naomi Black, Kathryn Holland, Bonnie Kime Scott, Rebecca Wisor and Reginald Abbott, argues that 'The Plumage Bill' is a 'direct prototype' (Abbott 265) for Woolf's later feminist polemics *A Room of One's Own* (1929) and *Three Guineas* (1938).[60] I will not dwell on their work here. Christina Alt and David Bradshaw argue that the essay demonstrates Woolf's engagement with protectionism as 'worthy of support but not exempt from criticism (Alt 2010 134, see Bradshaw 2014 24). I, however, will emphasise the unique Darwinian, (anti)imperialist and (post)human feminist politics of the essay, as expressed through

[60] For brief mentions of 'The Plumage Bill' as a feminist essay see: Briggs, Ellmann, Faris, Flint, Froula, Garrity, Leslie, McCouat, Romero Mariscal, Tromanhauser (2012), Walker, and Wood. This chapter builds on my MLitt dissertation on 'The Plumage Bill' (2016) and related publications (2017 and forthcoming).

Woolf's engagement with what I am calling the Darwinian feathered woman trope. I consider these questions in the broader context for this analysis, the sixth mass extinction event (Kolbert 3), a phenomenon which was becoming apparent at the turn of the twentieth century and is extremely pressing today. Reading Woolf's essay in the colonial context of its composition, and through the lens of Darwin's work – which profoundly influenced the plumage trade debate – I will build on earlier scholarship, demonstrating that this essay is significant in its own right. Indeed, we shall see that Woolf anticipates some of the most pressing topics in contemporary literary animal studies: representations of animals, women, empire, and extinction.

This chapter makes three key claims. First, in section two, I will argue that discourse around the plumage trade debate, and the trope of the feathered woman, was underpinned by three key contexts which have been overlooked by Woolf scholarship: the colonial nature of the feather trade, Darwin's thinking on extinction, and his trope of the feathered woman, all evident in *The Descent of Man*. Second, I turn in section three to Woolf's engagement through her Plumage Bill essay with these three contexts, arguing that Woolf challenged the 'injustice' (*E*3 243) of the Darwinian feathered woman trope central to the plumage trade debate, whilst engaging in 'British imperial feminism' (Burton 29). My term (anti)imperialist holds in play Woolf's resistance to, and complicity in, imperialist discourse. Thirdly, consolidating these themes in section four, I demonstrate how Woolf re-inscribes the Darwinian feathered woman trope through 'tropological transformations' (de Man 241) in her later works, twisting the trope to posthuman, post-Darwinian, feminist advantage. In short, I will offer insight into the Darwinian, imperial and (post)human stakes of 'The Plumage Bill,' as well as exploring the evolution of the Darwinian feathered woman trope across Woolf's works.

5.1.2 Posthumanism

Before turning to the above themes, it is necessary to outline the proto-posthumanist (hereafter I will use the posthuman) stakes of this debate. This chapter draws on feminist philosopher Rosi Braidotti, and postcolonial posthumanist Maneesha Deckha's understanding of posthumanism. Braidotti explains that humanism 'historically developed into a civilizational model, which shaped a certain idea of Europe as coinciding with the universalizing powers of self-reflexive reason' (13), a position which 'fuelled' British imperialism (15). The 'Eurocentric paradigm' of humanism, she writes, 'implies the dialectics of self and other,' such that '[s]ubjectivity is equated with consciousness, universal rationality, and self-regulating ethical behaviour, whereas otherness is defined as its negative and specular counterpart' (15). This paradigm has 'both essentialist and lethal connotations for people branded,' (sexualized, racialized, and naturalized) as others, 'who are reduced to the less than human status of disposable bodies' (15). In resistance to humanist imperialism, binaries, and the marginalisation that these produce and necessitate, Braidotti proposes posthumanism as an '[a]ffirmative politics' that 'combines critique with creativity in the pursuit of alternative visions and projects' of non-binary subject relations (54). Posthumanism thus 'introduces a qualitative shift in our thinking about what exactly is the basic unit of common reference for our species, our polity and our relationship to the other inhabitants of this planet' (Braidotti 1-2). This chapter responds to Deckha's call, which pushes Braidotti's work further, for 'feminist work on animals [to] become more intersectional' (2012 530). She too explains how under colonialism the 'cultivation of ideas of race, culture, gender, and species' were 'interactive and mutually constitutive' (2008 252). My response considers the discursive relationship between feminism, empire and extinction on the (post)humanist plumage trade debate.

Braidotti's and Deckha's work on posthumanism is useful for thinking through Darwin's and Woolf's contributions to the plumage trade debate, because both writers engage with humanist imperialism in (r)evolutionary ways. Darwin's work both reinforced

and fundamentally destabilised different aspects of humanism. On the one hand, he provided a new biological humanist paradigm that replaced God and creationism with the natural laws of evolution, comprehensible through 'self-reflexive reason' (Braidotti 13). The Eurocentric bias of his approach is neatly emblematised by the primary purpose of the *Beagle* voyage, during which Darwin gathered what became, years later, foundational evidence for evolutionary theory. The journey was fundamentally a 'civilising' one: settling three 'civilised' Fuegians 'in their own country was one chief inducement to Captain FitzRoy to undertake the voyage' (*Journal* 197). The voyage was *also* a colonial reconnaissance enterprise, for as David Amigoni points out, the 'real business of survey ships was imperial expansion […] with an eye for trading and strategic advantages' and the 'preservation' of new territories (*Journal* 'Introduction' xiii). Although Darwin, as gentleman companion to FitzRoy, did not directly decide the Fuegians' fate, his voyage was part of a broader humanist 'tradition of colonial natural history and environmentalism' (*Journal* 'Introduction' xiv).

On the other hand, Darwin exploded the human/animal binary and decentred the human from rational discourse by suggesting that humans and 'animals do not differ in kind, although immensely in degree,' which 'does not justify us placing man in a distinct kingdom' (*Descent* 173). In this sense, his works were radically anti-humanist, even posthuman, anticipating Braidotti's 'qualitative shift' in our approach to 'our relationship' to 'our species' (1-2). Indeed, posthumanists Cary Wolfe and Natasha Lennard place Darwin in 'a genealogy of posthumanist thought that stretches back well before the twenty-first or even twentieth century,' a genealogy associated with any discourse 'that fundamentally decentres the human' and includes a 'more considered concept of the 'human' itself' (2017 np). To quote Braidotti again, Darwin's theory of evolution centred on the 'recomposition' of the human and nonhuman in an 'affirmative bond that locates the subject in the flow of relations with multiple others' (50). If Darwinism anticipated posthumanism, Woolf's contributions

to the plumage trade debate are also posthumanist *avant la letter*, as we shall see, challenging whilst being complicit in the civilising, humanist rhetoric of the debate.

5.1.3 Woolf and The Plumage (Prohibition) Bill

Woolf would likely have been aware that bird conservationist H. J. Massingham and others debated the plumage bill and the trade in *The Times* (which she read regularly), *The Nation* (an intellectual weekly of which Massingham was editor), the *Spectator*, and *Observer*. Her library contained multiple bird-watching guides, including *An Illustrated Manual of British Birds* (1899) annotated by Woolf, *How to Attract and Protect Wild Birds* (1912), and an RSPB pamphlet *Our Ally the Bird* (1913) (King and Miletic-Vejzovic np).[61] Woolf knew that despite the popularity of military and ceremonial plumes amongst men, women were held responsible for the plumage trade. The Audubon Society (an American bird preservation group) offered public lectures on 'Woman as a Bird Enemy' (Richards 246), the British Society for the Protection of Birds (SPB) condemned the unmaternal women who 'disfigured' themselves with the 'nuptial plumage' of birds whose chicks starved to death (qtd in Richards 246), and Massingham frequently blamed women for the trade.

Woolf joined the plumage trade debate in response to one of Massingham's many articles on the topic. In an article drawing on a Darwinian understanding of extinction, Massingham writes (under the pseudonym Wayfarer), in his weekly column in *The Nation*, 'A London Diary' (10 July 1920):

[61] Woolf's other bird books were: William Yarrell's *A History of British Birds* (1856); Alfred Charles Smith's *The Birds of Wiltshire: Comprising All the Periodical and Occasional Visitants, as Well as those which are Indigenous to the Country* (1887); Leonard Howard Lloyd Irby's *British Birds: Key List* (1892); Alfred Newton's *A Dictionary of Birds* (1893-96); Henry Seebohm's *A History of British Birds, with Notes on their Classification and Geographical Distribution, also Sixty-eight Coloured Plates of their Eggs* (1896); W. H. Hudson's *Adventures among Birds* (1924) and *Birds in London* (1924); Cicely Kershaw's *Familiar Birds of Ceylon* (1925); W. E. Wait's *Manual of the Birds of Ceylon* [1925]; and Eric Walter White's *Wander Birds with Ten Silhouettes Cut by Lotte Reiniger* (1934). See Alt 2010 and Gillespie on Woolf and Hudson.

> Now that the Plumage Bill has been smothered the massacre of the innocents will continue. Nature puts an end to birds and the trade together. Her veto will be final, and as science declares that six years without birds means the end of her animate system, the end of the Plumage Trade may possibly coincide with the end of *us* (original emphasis 463).

He then discusses the mass killing of hummingbirds; birds of paradise 'in imminent danger of extinction;' the egret 'exterminated out of country after country;' albatrosses, kingfishers, cranes, flamingos, ibises, spoonbills, condors, quetzals, toucans, and 'dozens of other species […] reduced to a fraction of their abundance' (463). Many of these birds were indigenous to colonial India, the Americas, Australia, and Africa. He identifies the cause of this species loss: '[t]hey have to be shot in parenthood for child-bearing women to flaunt the symbols of it,' and 'one bird shot for its plumage means ten other deadly wounds and the starvation of the young. But what do women care? Look at Regent Street this morning!' (Massingham 10 July 1920 463-4). Massingham considered plumed 'child-bearing women' culpable for the near extinction of exotic birds. He called the 'continuity of *evolution*' which involved as he saw it, 'raising the moral currency of civilised nations' (emphasis added *E*3 244 n4). His article, we shall see, utilised the Darwinian feathered woman trope.

Woolf, who wrote and advertised in *The Nation*, with her husband joining the editorial board in 1923, responded to Massingham's article with her essay 'The Plumage Bill' (23 July 1920), first published in the British weekly suffrage journal *Woman's Leader* which was edited by her friend feminist Ray Strachey. In her narrative essay, Woolf acknowledged species loss, writing, 'The Plumage Bill has been smothered; millions of birds are doomed not only to extinction but to torture; and "Wayfarer's" comment is, "What does ones expect?"' (*E*3 241). She then reproduces the second passage above ('They have to be shot […] this morning!'). She asks, '[c]an it be that it is a graver sin to be unjust to women

than to torture birds?' (243). Woolf, then, turns away from questions of extinction towards the misogyny of the feathered woman trope and Massingham's 'insult to women' (245). I want to suggest, however, that Woolf considers the stakes of the feathered woman trope for both women *and* birds in the context of colonialism, and Darwin's views on sexual selection and extinction. Before demonstrating this, it is necessary to outline the humanist colonial context of the trade, and the Darwinian (post)humanist preoccupation with feathered women tropes and extinction underpinning the plumage trade debate.

Section 5.2 Contexts: Empire, Sex, Extinction

5.2.1 A Colonial History

Feather fashions, made possible by the colonial plumage trade, were prominent in Europe from at least the 1770s, and probably long beforehand. Marie Antoinette is said to have inspired the fashion around 1775 by placing ostrich and peacock feathers in her hair 'upon a whimsy' (Doughty 1). According to feather fashion historian Robin Doughty, 'heron feathers were symbols of authority among eastern potentates. Returning Crusaders reportedly carried them back to Europe as spoils of war. They were worn on knights' helmets and later set […] on the headdress of courtly ladies' (12). They were also popular with the Western European military in the nineteenth century (Doughty 12-13). Marie Antoinette's whimsy thus alluded to a chain of Western violence and appropriation that began with the medieval Crusades against the Islamic Middle East and became a feature of European colonialism and military expansion. Feathered woman tropes, then, are slippery signifiers which gesture towards imperial status and colonial exploitation. By the mid-nineteenth century the plumage trade was a significant source of income for European traders journeying to Asia, South America, and other parts of the world. Darwin's peer Alfred Russell Wallace estimated that one shipment of 400 birds of paradise would fetch £500 in London, while a shipment of 4,000 insects would fetch only £200 (Fagan 67-68). In just one year in the 1880s, 'over 400,000

West Indian and Brazilian birds and some 350,000 East Indian birds sold on the London market' (Richards 246). The plumage trade was evidently a global colonial trade which destroyed bird populations.

In the 1800s, the ethics of feather fashions and the plight of birds were pressing issues for imperial Britain, colonised India, and the rest of the world, marking a shift both away from the human (towards animal rights), and towards a humanist, environmentalist impulse to civilise the trade and limit practises that led to extinction. This period saw increased interest in animal protection motivated in part by Darwinism (see previous chapter). The UK had introduced its first bird protection act, the Sea Birds' Preservation Act, in 1869. This was followed by the formation of conservationist groups and attempts at further legislative prohibition. The SPB anti-plumage group was founded in Britain in 1889 with a branch established in India in 1900. Two years later India became the first country to ban the export of feathers following protests against 'killing insectivorous birds for plumage purposes' (Doughty 61) and the resulting 'ravages of insects in the paddy fields' (Massingham 22 March 1920, 18). Other countries such as Australia, Egypt and New Guinea followed suit (Haynes 28). In the 1920s however, the plumage trade debate was still raging in Britain. The founder of The Plumage Bill Group, H. J. Massingham, wrote in *The Nation* (24 April 1920) that '[t]wenty-five millions of wild birds were imported into England every year' (103), many of them smuggled from India (Doughty 61). Feathers adorned women's hats and accessories everywhere. Lord Avebury introduced the first Plumage (Prohibition) Bill in 1908 and further bills were proposed every year between then and the outbreak of World War One (Doughty 118). Animal welfare laws in the UK and British colonies were not, however, simply shaped by concerns for animal safety. Deckha explains that 'imperialism and the need to maintain a 'civilized' identity vis-à-vis colonized peoples' led to the criminalisation of some forms of animal cruelty, which reinforced civilizational hierarchies and British claims 'to a more civilized and progressive 'home' culture and nation' (2013

521). As such, discourse about animal welfare legislation was, she observes, 'imbricated in civilizing missions as opposed to primarily addressing animal suffering' (2013 524). In February 1920 Colonel Yate introduced the Plumage (Prohibition) Bill, which failed to make a quorum five times, and collapsed (Alt 2010 133). This is the bill Woolf discusses in her essay on feather fashions, empire, and extinction. Before discussing this essay, I will outline the Darwinian discourse underpinning the plumage trade debate.

5.2.2 Extinction & Empire

The plumage trade debate emerged in the context of wider concerns, evident in Darwin's writing and in modernist literature, about what is now called the sixth mass extinction event, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These predominantly human-caused extinctions are a characteristic of what has been termed the Anthropocene, generally understood as the period where 'humankind has become a global geological force in its own right' (Steffen et al 842) affecting the climate, geology and biodiversity of the planet. For Donna Haraway the Anthropocene is:

> more than climate change, it's also extraordinary burdens of toxic chemistry, mining, nuclear pollution, depletion of lakes and rivers under and above ground, *ecosystem simplification, vast genocides of people and other critters* […] in systemically linked patterns that threaten major system collapse after major system collapse (emphasis added 2016 100).

Scientists have identified human(ist) activity – particularly the 'ecological changes unleashed by colonialism' (Paravisini-Gebert 341), leading to habitat destruction, overhunting and competition with non-native species – as a major factor in the sixth mass

extinction.[62] Approximately 280 animal species went extinct from 1500 to 1900 (Lewis and Maslin 178) many in Darwin's lifetime, including the mysterious starling, Mauritius blue pigeon, broad-faced potoroo, Falkland Islands wolf, Labrador duck, great auk, sea mink (Turvey 103, 87, 43, 49, 68, 145), and more. In the years leading up to Woolf's plumage bill essay further species went extinct, including the Auckland Island merganser (1902), New Zealand piopio (1905), huia bird (1907), Canary Islands oystercatcher (1913), passenger pigeon (1914), and Carolina parakeet in 1918 (Turvey 145, 103, 167, 89). The Anthropocene and associated sixth extinction then, were the result of the 'Eurocentric paradigm' of colonial humanist ideology and practises in which animals 'are reduced to the less than human status of disposable bodies' (Braidotti 15). Extinction was a growing issue in Darwin and Woolf's lifetimes.

The concept of extinction was central to Darwin's theory of evolution and was first established as scientific fact by Georges Cuvier in 1812 following his study of the remains of the extinct American mastodon (Kolbert 24-25). Previously, extinction had been dismissed as 'incompatible with natural theolog[y]' (Hovanec 44). Darwin observed that 'how largely extinction has acted in the world's history, geology plainly declares' (*Origin* 98). He argued that 'Natural Selection almost inevitably causes much Extinction of the less improved forms of life' (*Origin* 7), indeed 'the very process of natural selection almost implies the continual supplanting and extinction of preceding and intermediate gradations' (*Origin* 39). Therefore 'extinction and natural selection […] go hand in hand' (*Origin* 130) in the gradual process of evolution, including '[t]he extinction of [human] races' (*Descent* 194). Extinction, now explicable through evolutionary theory, was recognised in the 1800s as a very real threat to humans and animals alike. Darwinism did not, however, account for the swift human-caused extinction of the species named above (Steller's sea cow went extinct within twenty-seven years of its discovery by Europeans). Darwin only briefly

[62] See also Lewis and Maslin.

mentions human-caused extinction, observing that animals become rare before they go extinct: 'we know this has been the progress of events with those animals which have been exterminated, either locally or wholly, through man's agency' (*Origin* 235). The phrase 'we know' assumes audience familiarity with human-caused extinction but he did not push the subject further. Darwin, then, popularised the concepts of human and animal extinction.

Extinction was an early twentieth century and a modernist concern as recent scholarship, including two theses on Modernism and the Anthropocene by Edward Howell (2017) and Peter Adkins (2019; monograph forthcoming), demonstrates. Just as the modernists 'were opening up animal worlds to the imagination' actual animals were being driven to extinction 'with unprecedented efficiency' (Hovanec 203). Indeed, Christina Alt observes that H.G. Wells 'expresses a distinctly fin de siècle, evolution-induced, anxiety about the future of human dominance, the power of technology, and the long-term survival of the species' (2014 30). The threat of extinction looms in Elizabeth Bowen's late modernist text *The Little Girls* (Mattison), E. M. Forster's writing (Howell 2017), and across H. G. Wells' works (Howell 2017 198, Hovanec 44-47). Woolf read, wrote about, and owned many of Wells' books, including historical and scientific work such as *A Short History of the World* (1924) and *The Science of Life: A Summary of Contemporary Knowledge about Life and its Possibilities* (co-authored with Julian Huxley and G.P. Wells, 1929-30).[63] The Hogarth Press also published his *The Common Sense of World Peace* (1929), *Democracy under Revision* (1927), *The Open Conspiracy: Blue Prints for a World Revolution* (1930), *The Idea of a World Encyclopaedia* (1936). She would therefore have been familiar with his preoccupation with extinction, and perhaps read his essay 'On Extinction' (1893) in the

[63] Woolf also owned his *The Country of the Blind, and Other Stories* (1911); *In the Fourth Year: Anticipations of a World Peace* (1918); *Joan and Peter: The Story of an Education* (1918); *Mr. Belloc Objects to "The Outline of History"* (1926); *Mr. Britling Sees it Through* (1916); *The New America, the New World* (1935); *The New Machiavelli* (1911); *A Short History of the World* (1924); *The Way to World Peace* (1930). (King and Miletic-Vejzovic np).

popular *Chamber's Journal.* In it, Wells discussed the colonial 'tragedy of Extinction' (1975 169):

> In the last hundred years the swift change of condition throughout the world, due to the invention of new means of transit, geographical discovery, and the consequent "swarming" of the whole globe by civilized men, has pushed many an animal to the very verge of destruction (170).

Colonial, human-caused extinction was a theme throughout modernist and early-twentieth century writing. This wider concern fed into specific anxieties around bird species loss that informed the plumage trade debate.

5.2.3 Sexual Selection, Avian Aesthetics, and Feathered Female Agency

The plumage trade debate was informed not only by colonial and extinction discourse and practises, but by Darwin's work on sexual selection, including his discussions of feather fashions, sexual agency, and avian aesthetics. Darwin's four chapters in *The Descent of Man* on sexual selection in birds – which he noted were of 'considerable length' (407) –theorise sexual characteristics (such as decorative plumes) and the action of sexual selection (such as courtship rituals) in birds. He claims that birds are:

> the most aesthetic of all animals, excepting of course man, and they have nearly the same taste for the beautiful as we have. This is shewn by our enjoyment of the singing birds, and by our women, both civilized and savage, decking their heads with borrowed plumes, and using gems which are hardly more brilliantly coloured than the naked skin and wattles of certain birds (*Descent* 408).

Darwin both destabilised the humanist belief in the uniqueness of human aesthetics by demonstrating that birds had aesthetic faculties, and reinforced the humanist logic which aligned women, 'savages' and animals as others. He argued that sexual selection in birds occurred through 'the selection by females of the more beautiful males' (*Descent* 437), chosen for their otherwise apparently useless 'ornamental' characteristics (*Descent* 557), like song and brilliant plumage. Thus peahens, for example, 'rendered the peacock the most splendid of living birds' (*Descent* 487). The principle of female aesthetic choice shaped the evolution of species by ensuring females selected the most beautiful males across generations.

Darwin associated the feather trade with indigenous (colonised) hunters and white women buyers. His observations of women's feather fashions informed his theory of sexual selection: he writes that bird tastes change 'like changes of fashion with us' (*Descent* 554), and that birds resemble humans for whom 'any fleeting fashion in dress comes to be admired' (434). Darwin considered birds in their 'ornamental dress' (557) – including plumage – to be like 'women [who] everywhere deck themselves with these plumes' (115). For Darwin, Victorian feather fashions, as Evelleen Richards explains, 'manifested his principle of female ornamentation in humans and male ornamentation in birds, with concomitant male choice in humans and female choice in birds' (242). Darwin argued for human *male* choice in the 'selection of women' (*Descent* 652) stating that 'man is largely […] influenced in the choice of his wife by external appearance' (640). Thus, Darwin denied choice to women whose feather fashions had informed his theory of sexual selection, granting them only enough sexual agency to select ornaments to attract men. Darwin did not take an explicit stance on bird conservation (though he cited bird conservationists including John James Audubon and Francis Orpen Morris in his work). That said, he knew that the plumage trade cost the lives of 'twenty birds […] in a single day' (*Descent* 533) at any given

hunting spot. He writes of 'birdcatchers' from New Guinea and Guiana who 'catch an astonishing number of various small species alive for the London market' (446), and describes the breeding season, when these hunters, 'kill with their poisoned arrows four or five males, one after the other,' and 'a skilful archer may shoot' over a dozen birds of paradise at once (446). Darwin recognised that female bird 'skins are valueless' (456), while British women 'borrow the plumes of male birds' (665). He was evidently complicit in identifying both indigenous bird hunters and white western women as creating the supply and demand for the plumage trade while erasing those who profited by this trade. Darwin's alignment of women's feather fashions and birds therefore shaped the trope of the frivolous and murderous feathered woman, abetted by the profiteering colonial subject, central to the plumage trade debate.

5.2.4 'Designs After Nature': The Popularisation of Darwin's Feathered Woman

I have, so far, outlined the history of the plumage trade debate in its colonial context and shown how the debate, and the trope of the feathered woman, was informed by Darwinian theories of extinction and sexual selection. The conservationist side of the plumage trade debate, while informed by justifiable concerns regarding species loss, was also shaped by a misogynist reduction of women to the status of preening animals with less agency than female birds. This reduction was exemplified and popularised by Edward Linley Sambourne's satirical 'Designs After Nature' fashion illustration series, published in the popular magazine *Punch* (1867-1876), with early illustrations casting women as bird-like 'savages,' and later illustrations blaming women for bird species loss. Sambourne's 1870 illustration 'I would I were a bird,' published the year before the *Descent of Man*, 'prefigures' Darwin's use of feathered women tropes (Richards 248). In it, a woman flaunts a feathered headdress reminiscent of those worn by Native American plains tribes, conflating the feathered woman with the so-called savage, whilst simultaneously satirising the excesses

of female feather fashions by combining ostrich feathers with various other plumes. Most of the illustrations appeared 'a few weeks after the publication of *The Descent of Man*, to which,' Richards claims, they 'clearly refe[r]' (247). Two images depict women as part-peacock, recalling Darwin's claim that generations of peahens have, by sexual selection, made the peacock the most 'splendid' bird (*Descent* 487). The illustrations also replicate the contradictions of Darwin's theory, 'through the same medium of female fashion and decoration, via the notion of the designing woman' that Darwin used to attribute choice to female birds which he denied women (Richards 248). Finally, the peacock-woman evokes Darwin's claim that peacocks are 'the very emblem of pride and vanity' (*Descent* 453), implying that women's fashion choices also indicated such pride and vanity. Sambourne's series, then, popularised and commented on Darwin's theory of sexual selection, suggesting that women's agency was limited to ornamental fashion plumes, and satirising such fashions whilst blurring human/animal bodily boundaries through the trope of the feathered woman.

Sambourne's illustrations evolved, as he became an SPB 'stalwart' (Doughty 97), into anti-plumage trade pieces and his feathered women into tropes that gestured towards extinction. His sketch 'A Bird of Prey' (14 May 1892), depicts a woman wearing a feather boa, plumed hat, and feathered wings, looming, with claws instead of feet, over a small bird. The anti-plumage campaigns had publicised the numbers of birds killed in the thousands for the fashion trade and Sambourne's work explicitly condemned women for their role in preying on birds. Sambourne's 'The 'Extinction' of the Species: Or, the fashion-plate lady without mercy and the egrets' (6 September 1899) depicts a smiling woman holding a hat adorned with feathers and a dead egret. Another egret tumbles from the sky behind her. This image takes Sambourne's message further, suggesting that feather fashions do not just kill birds, they drive species to extinction. These feathered women illustrations not only emerge from Darwinian thinking, they establish a trope which erases male involvement and profit from plumage trade discourse, shifts culpability to women, and restricts female agency to

selecting ornamental fashion plumes at the cost of driving birds to near extinction. These illustrations portrayed fashionable women as part-bird, part-human, simultaneously ridiculing women for their absurd fashions; aligning them with 'savages;' condemning women for their complicity in the feather trade and associated species loss; and popularising Darwin's view that women lacked significant levels of agency. In the popular discourse exemplified by Sambourne's *Punch* illustrations, and in Darwin's *The Descent of Man*, both of which underpinned the plumage trade debate, women, like male birds, only had agency in their selection of frivolous ornaments. For women this ultimately led to bird extinction.

Section 5.3 Woolf and the Plumage (Prohibition) Bill

5.3.1 Woolf's Imperial Feminism

I have shown that there were several key contexts underpinning the plumage trade debate – empire, increasing awareness of extinction, and Darwin's work on birds and feathered women in the *Descent of Man*, all popularised by Sambourne's illustrations – which we need to consider when discussing Woolf's essay 'The Plumage Bill.' I now will demonstrate that Woolf's essay engages with these three contexts in (r)evolutionary ways, challenging Massingham's misogynist Darwinian representation of feathered women. She does so through the humanist British imperial feminist trope of the twist (Cuddy-Keane 137), as I will explain, exploding this depiction of feathered women as having only murderous and trivially motivated agency, and addressing issues of species loss.

Woolf's essay contains several feminist twists. Woolf's narrator looks out onto Regent Street and sketches out the character of the consummate consumer, 'Lady So-and-so' (*E*3 242). This 'lady of a different class altogether' with 'something of the greedy petulance of a pug-dog's face at tea-time' goes shopping:

> When she comes to the display of egret plumes, artfully arranged and centrally placed, she pauses. So do many women. For, after all, what can be more ethereally and fantastically lovely? These plumes seem to be the natural adornment of spirited and fastidious life, the very symbols of pride and distinction (242).

Later, she is seen at the opera 'looking lovely with a lemon-coloured egret in her hair' (242).[64] Woolf appears to join Massingham in his condemnation of feather-wearing women, but she then presents an even more damning portrayal of men involved in the plumage trade. Birds, she says 'are killed by men, tortured by men and starved by men – not vicariously, but with their own hands' (242). She writes:

> Let us imagine a blazing South American landscape. In the foreground a bird with a beautiful plume circles round and round as if lost or giddy. There are red holes in its head where there should be eyes. Another bird, tie to a stake, writhes incessantly, for red ants devour it. Both are decoys. […] imagine innumerable mouths opening and shutting, opening and shutting, until – as no parent bird comes to feed them – the young birds rot where they sit (242).

She invites the reader to imagine South American hunters, a 'bird tightly held in one hand while another hand pierces the eyeballs with a feather' (242). Feathers are both a source of violence and the profitable result. Furthermore, Woolf seems here to be reinforcing Darwin and Massingham's focus on indigenous exotic bird hunters as responsible for British women's feather fashions, whilst eliding the role of British male profiteers.

[64] See the 2011 exhibition *Fashioning Feathers: Dead Birds, Millinery Crafts and the Plumage Trade* which featured a manikin 'mock-up of Lady So-and-So' complete with 'ostrich feather shrug and a lemon coloured egret feather' (Merle and Foster 5).

‘But these hands,’ she continues, ‘are they the hands of men or of women?’ (242). Are they the hands, I ask, of Europeans or South Americans? Woolf does not specify. She says that a ‘small band of East End profiteers’ (implicitly Jewish men, as discussed in the previous chapter) support the trade, but it is South Americans, presumably, whom she calls ‘the very scum of mankind’ (242). Woolf appears to situate the worst of the trade and the cruellest traders outside her own race and nation. Her criticism of the greedy, stupid Lady So-and-so aligns her views with Darwin’s, Sambourne’s and Massingham’s, but her condemnation of male involvement in the trade adds what Woolf scholar Melba Cuddy-Keane calls a ‘trope of the twist’ (137). Woolf’s twist is simultaneously conservationist, and critiques Massingham’s misogyny by appealing to multiple audiences – such as plumage buyers, conservationists, and the feminist readership of *Woman’s Leader* – on polyvocal, ironic, and multi-discursive levels (Cuddy-Keane 148). Cuddy-Keane points to both the risks of twisting tropes (if misread they will reinforce the dominant narrative which they seek to undercut), and to their subversive potential, which enables Woolf to ‘chastis[e] her adversaries whilst turning them into allies’ (150). Massingham is invited to shift the blame from British women to South American men and East End profiteers, both implicitly racialised others, the contemporary versions of Darwin’s ‘dealers,’ ‘birdcatchers,’ and ‘Indians of Guiana’ (286, 456).

In transferring culpability to these racialised others, Woolf becomes complicit in what historian Antoinette Burton calls ‘British imperial feminism’ (29), a term which recognises that both ‘feminism and imperialism were motivated by a redemptive impulse based on a sense of moral superiority and national responsibility’ towards colonised peoples (61). British imperial feminism, then, contains a tension between humanist civilising impulses, and feminist attempts to challenge humanist assumptions of ‘self-reflexive reason’ (Braidotti 13) as the domain of men. *Common Cause*, for example, an earlier version of *Woman’s Leader*, featured a striking instance of British imperial feminism when it gave a

glowing report on the Coronation Empire Pageant of June 1911. The suffrage pageant of women from Britain and the British colonies projected an image of 'international sisterhood' dependent on consenting subjects, promoting the suffrage of women within empire but not from it (Burton 196). Woolf's essay was published in a journal with a history of using colonised others to elevate the status of white British women. It is therefore no surprise that Woolf uses South American plume hunters to align (white) female empowerment and justice with civilisation. Woolf unites her multiple British audiences as allies by appealing to this sense of national responsibility: South Americans become members of the implicitly uncivilised nations invoked to condemn the bill and 'injustice to women' (*E*3 243). Woolf's (r)evolutionary writing here, as Nels Pearson puts it, 'both challenges and reflects imperialist ideology' (Pearson 428).

Massingham's response to Woolf's essay, published in *Woman's Leader* (30 July 1920), accuses her of holding an 'ambiguous' position regarding the trade, and appeals to her sense of the 'profoundly important common duty' to 'rais[e] the moral currency of civilised nations' (*E*3 245 n4). Woolf replied (*Woman's Leader* 6 August 1920) that challenging his 'insult to women' was her 'way of 'raising the moral currency of civilised nations'' (*E*3 245 n4). Woolf raises this currency by shifting culpability for the plumage trade from English women to South American men, lowering the currency of supposedly uncivilised nations as she raises the worth of Englishness and English women. We have seen that Woolf's ambiguous satire risks reinforcing the dominant narrative which it seeks to undercut (Melba Cuddy-Keane 151). Whether or not Woolf *is* being ironic here, she writes her way into humanist civilising discourse and British imperial feminism in her attempt to restore women's agency and dismiss their culpability for bird species loss. She simultaneously aligns Englishwomen with birds as 'victims of male violence, a move that effectively erases cultural and geographical differences as it proclaims the innocence of white women' (Garrity 2003 75). Woolf avoids discussing the complexity of women's

involvement in the trade (as founders of the SPB, milliners, or feather wearing) in Britain and abroad, and presents Englishwomen as unified and classless (or automatically middle class) to resist Massingham's misogyny.

Beyond Woolf's (anti)imperial feminism, the wider imperial context underpinning the plumage trade, which Darwin gestured towards in *The Descent of Man*, was even more explicit in the plumage trade debate. Massingham continually condemned the trade as an irresponsible iteration of colonialism while proposing 'civilising' legislation in line with Deckha's observations. He wrote in *The Nation,* 'our colonies […] repeatedly called on us to stop acting as a receiver of stolen and smuggled goods' (24 April 1920 103) and blamed the trade for 'murdered game-wardens' and 'poorly paid child-labour' (10 July 1920 455) in India. Despite its progressive aims – that '[n]o argument for imperialism can be made' (10 July 1920 480) – *The Nation* also engaged in imperialist rhetoric, when discussing 'the savage and rapacious trade' (24 April 1920 103). Other newspapers followed a similar line; an unsigned article (which sounds suspiciously like Massingham) published in *The Times* (March 1920), says:

> [Feathers] deck women's hats with what is essentially a barbaric adornment. British people are accustomed to pride themselves on leading the way […] in legislating for dumb creatures' welfare, but in this toleration of a wasteful, cruel, and barbaric industry we have too long lagged behind both the United States and our own Dominions (Anon 26 March 1920 15).

This passage evidences intersecting appeals to national pride, and the racist, misogynist alignment of the female and 'barbaric' in the rhetoric of the plumage trade debate, rhetoric which speaks to Deckha's observation that legislation was more concerned with civilising discourse than animal welfare. If 'our own Dominions' are less 'barbaric' than the British,

then they threaten to destabilise the hierarchy of Britain's 'moral currency' and it is for this reason, implicitly, that women must stop investing in the plumage trade (*E*3 245). The feathered woman was a Darwinian trope, then, which cast women in fashion plumes as savage, laughable, and erroneous at best, and responsible for bird extinction at worst. Woolf, in challenging this trope, became complicit in the civilising humanist discourse of British imperial feminism.

5.3.2 Female Sexual Agency?

Woolf's 'The Plumage Bill' not only engages in imperial feminism, she also challenges Massingham's mobilisation of the Darwinian feathered woman trope as a figure capable only of 'the choice of the trivial, the frivolous' (Richards 255), at the cost of species loss. The second line of her essay quotes Massingham's article 'What does ones expect? They have to be shot in parenthood for child-bearing women to flaunt the symbols of it […] But what do women care?' (*E*3 241). In this line, Massingham aligns 'child-bearing women' with male birds whose breeding plumage adorns their hats, invoking the Darwinian association of sexual ornamentation and lack of sexual choice in male birds and women, whilst suggesting that women abuse what little agency they do have. Massingham's claims spoke to Darwin's and Sambourne's suggestion that women's agency, limited to the decorative, was dangerous even in that capacity. Woolf offers up several alternatives to this depiction of female agency. First, in her response to Massingham's accusations of ambiguity, Woolf states that she has 'signed a pledge never to wear one of the condemned feathers, and have kept the vow,' refusing to invest in the plumage trade, whilst offering 'whatever sum I receive for my article, not upon an egret plume, but upon a subscription to the Plumage Bill Group' (*E*3 244-5 n4). She suggests here that women have the monetary power, and use it, to boycott the trade and invest in conservation, thus actively *saving* birds from extinction. Second, in the same response, she posits that to 'denounce as forcibly as I could the injustice' of

Massingham's comments is 'an odious but obvious necessity,' to protect women from the 'damage,' Massingham inflicts 'not merely to women's relations with men but to her art and her conduct' (245 n4). Women's agency, their art, is not circumscribed by an innate vanity then, but rather by the misogyny of men like Massingham.

The feathered woman trope, in *The Descent of Man*, Sambourne's Darwinian illustrations, and Massingham's writing, point to an interconnection between questions of woman-bird agency and the boundaries between human and bird. While European men were granted (explicitly in Darwin's case, implicitly in Sambourne and Massingham's) both agency (sexual choice) and the highest degree of aesthetic taste, women held an unstable position, with less agency and aesthetic capacity than these men or female birds, whilst being aligned with the 'savage' (*Descent* 408, Massingham 24 April 1920 103). We have seen that Woolf places the responsibility for the trade with racialised men, creating a clear distinction between these men and white women, putting women on the civilised side of the civil/savage binary. Her troubling of the woman-bird boundary is more nuanced. She writes that she is 'writing not as a bird, or even a champion of birds; but as a woman' (*E*3 245 n4), gesturing towards Massingham's conflation (through his feathered woman tropes) of birds and women. Woolf's semi-colon both separates and unites bird and women here just as it did with women and dogs in *Flush: A Biography*. Her 'semi-colon appears to leave the possibility of boundary crossing,' of being, 'open' (Ryan 2012 160), undermining her negation ('not'), and anticipating the Agambenian caesura between human and animal: bird; woman. Furthermore, Woolf adds that 'it would never do to write *another* article solely from the bird's point of view' (emphasis added *E*3 245 n4), undercutting her claim that she was *not* writing as a bird. Woolf both points up Massingham's animalisation of women, and 'combines critique with creativity,' placing women 'in the flow of relations' with multispecies others, thus moving towards an 'affirmative' posthumanism (Braidotti 54, 50). We have seen that Woolf's involvement in the plumage trade debate was complicit with the

humanist civilising rhetoric of British imperial feminism, whilst also twisting the Darwinian frivolous feathered woman trope, against the work of Massingham and, implicitly, Sambourne and Darwin himself.

In one more trope of the twist, Woolf suggests that men, too, use ornamentation as a charm. Woolf repeats Massingham's quotation about birds being shot for child-bearing women's fashions after pointing out that men profit from the trade. She then asks, 'what is the nature of this compulsion?' (*E*3 243). The deictic 'this' could refer either to women's compulsion to buy feathers, or men's compulsion for profit, Woolf keeps both options in play. She continues:

> Well, men must make their livings, must earn their profits, and must beget children. For though some people say that they can control their passions, the majority maintain that they should be protected from them rather than condemned for them. In other words, it is one thing to desire a woman; quite another to desire an egret plume (*E*3 243).

Once again, she engages with Massingham using his own (in some senses Darwinian) discourse whilst speaking on multiple discursive levels, and then twists that discourse against his argument. She points out his double standards (men can desire women; women cannot desire plumes) and implicitly the inconsistency in Darwin's argument in the *Descent of Man* (female animals have sexual choice; women do not). She also suggests, with some irony, that male desire for profit is a proxy for the compulsion to beget children. This compulsion to reproduce, this 'must,' gestures towards the Darwinian law of natural selection. She implies that profit, linked by the comma to the following clause, 'and must beget children,' may be a form of sexual ornamentation to attract *women* for reproductive purposes.

5.3.3 Woolf and Extinction

Woolf claimed that to 'torture birds is one thing, and to be unjust to women is another,' stating that she 'was attacking the second of these crimes and not the first' (*E*3 245). I, however, argue that she *was* taking a stand against bird torture and species loss in 'The Plumage Bill.' Here I will explore examples of Woolf figuring extinction across her works. In the early 1900s, Woolf, James Joyce and Djuna Barnes, were 'already theorising' what Peter Adkins calls 'the modernist Anthropocene,' with aesthetics which responded to 'cultural and scientific ideas' on extinction (5). Indeed, Woolf used the term extinction throughout her oeuvre, though often figuratively, rather than in regard to species loss. She uses the word extinction to discuss the end of English fiction and women's writing: Orlando's long poem is completed 'just in time to save the book from extinction' (*O* 248); in 'The Niece of an Earl' (1928) English fiction 'may change its character so that we no longer know it. It maybe become extinct' (*E*4 563). Woolf also writes, somewhat ironically, that 'if you let women work as men work, they'll die off much quicker. They'll become extinct' (*JR* 145), and, '[i]n three or four centuries, it appears, the prophet or prophetess whose message was voluntary and untaught became extinct' (*TG* 198). The concept of extinction does not refer to species here, but rather to literature, and it is only in *Orlando: A Biography* that we see a link between 'extinct monsters, globes, maps, elephants' (*O* 211). For Woolf, species loss was a useful way of thinking through the evolution of literature, where extinction might lead to new character, new forms, whilst considering how prophetic women were unable to flourish in the past.

Woolf became increasingly interested in the figurative and literal threat of human extinction in her late works, written at the beginning of World War Two, as Beer (1996 125-148) and Adkins demonstrate. In 'Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid' (1940), the 'drone of the planes' overhead makes 'all thinking stop' (*E*6 244) and in an early version of 'Anon' (1940-1) 'the future of language is almost extinct' (qtd in Silver 1979 416n56), although this

means language as we know it, rather than humanity. Woolf keeps literal and figurative extinction in play here. Likewise, *Between the Acts*, Beer argues, tells a 'story [of] extinction' (Beer 1996 9). Yet, Adkins observes, Woolf's 'interest is not in ensconcing literature within a humanist narrative that might be shored against the threat of extinction,' rather, Woolf's late writing explores 'a distinction that emerges between the end of *the* world and the end of *a* world' (Adkins 291-2). In 'The Leaning Tower' (1940), for example, emerging writers are 'dweller[s] in two worlds, one dying, the other struggling to be born' (*E*6 272-3), and must 'bridge the gulf between the two worlds' (277-8).

Woolf's narrative essay 'Flying over London' (written in 1928, published in 1950) is particularly preoccupied with extinction. The narrator observes from an aeroplane that the river Thames is 'as palaeolithic man saw it,' with 'a rhinoceros digging his horn in the roots' (*E*6 446). But 'Civilisation' soon 'emerged' and 'the centuries vanished and the wild rhinoceros was chased out of sight forever' (*E*6 446). This rapid evolutionary narrative identifies civilisation as the cause of the prehistoric Eurasian rhinoceros' extinction. Soon 'no human being was yet visible' and 'perhaps the race was yet dead' for:

> It was the idea of death that now suggested itself; not being received and welcomed; not immortality, but extinction. […] where there are gulls only, life is not. Life ends; life is dowsed in that cloud as lamps are dowsed with a wet sponge. That extinction has become now desirable. For it was odd in this voyage to note how blindly the tide of the soul and its desires rolled this way and that, carrying consciousness like a feather on the top, marking the direction, not controlling it (*E*6 446-7).

Extinction becomes desirable when all other life (except gulls, the first birds protected by UK law), appears extinct, and the 'desirab[ility]' of extinction appears linked to this. Soon

'the mind' is 'convinced' of its own 'extinction,' is 'proud of it, as if it deserved extinction,' indeed, the narrator exclaims 'Extinction! The word is consummation' (*E*6 447).

While the reason for 'deserv[ing]' extinction is unclear, human responsibility for species loss is certainly an available reading of this passage. The word 'consummation' implies the death of one world and creation of another, or as Adkins puts it, 'Woolf's extinction ethics suggest the potentiality for different futures' (321). The narrator, in comparing their consciousness to a feather, whilst flying like a bird, surrounded by gulls, neatly anchors their story in avian language, centred on the trope of the plume. As such, we might read this as refiguring of Massingham's discussion of feathered women and bird extinction that twists that trope from extinction as an end to *the* world to the end of *a* (human-dominated) world. While Adkins focuses on Woolf's late works, I want to consider how she theorises extinction, and her 'alertness to the way in which the threat of extinction might become the basis for new ways of existing in the present' (Adkins 286) in 'The Plumage Bill.'

Massingham's plumage trade argument, as we have seen, may have been shaped by Darwinian thinking on extinction. In 'The Plumage Bill' Woolf acknowledges the horrors of species loss caused by the plumage trade outlined in Massingham's article: 'The Plumage Bill has been smothered; millions of birds are doomed not only to *extinction* but to torture' (emphasis added *E*3 241). Although Woolf's essay focuses primarily on 'injustice to women' (243), she continues to engage with the question of human-caused extinction, describing the hunt, as we have seen, and the 'hand [that] pierces the eyeball with a feather' (242). Indeed, she describes 'innumerable mouths opening and shutting until, as no parent bird comes to feed them, the young birds rot where they sit. Then there are the wounded birds, trailing leg or wing, as they flutter off to droop and falter in the dust' (242). Woolf's use of the words 'mouths,' 'young birds,' and 'sit' instead of 'beaks,' 'chicks,' and 'perch' anthropomorphises the suffering of birds, appealing to the reader's sympathy whilst also

revealing the instability of human-animal boundaries. These descriptions of suffering birds do not appear in Massingham's article. Woolf may have read more widely on the Plumage Bill and bird extinction, perhaps in the *Times*, her bird protection texts, and in Massingham's other writings. Indeed, her essay calls for 'a body of disinterested men' to 'end the murder and torture of birds, and to make it impossible for a single egret to be robbed of a single plume' (*E*3 243). When Massingham called her article 'ambiguous' she asserted: 'I am wholly against the plumage trade,' adding that 'the trade is abominable and the cruelty repulsive' (*E*3 244-245n4). Woolf was evidently concerned with bird extinction, with the 'disposable [bird] bodies' (Braidotti 15) of humanist colonialism. In defending women and birds together in this narrative essay, she moves towards an 'affirmative,' (r)evolutionary posthumanism (Braidotti 50).

In doing so Woolf's narrative essay enacts what extinction theorist Thom van Dooren calls 'storying' (10). In van Dooren's *Flight Ways: Life and Loss at the Edge of Extinction* (2014), 'story' is a verb, and 'a vital contributor to the emergence of "what is"' (10). For him, '[s]tories are part of the world, and so they participate in its becoming' (10). He writes, for example, about 'how penguins story places' (68) and about his writing on penguins as 'storying and place-making' (17). Like Woolf, van Dooren's 'approach to thinking through extinction' centres on 'avian entanglements' of multispecies 'co-evolution and ecological dependency' (van Dooren 4). He 'unsettles human[ist] exceptionalist frameworks,' and asks 'what extinction teaches us, how it remakes us, and what it requires of us' (5). These questions include 'What kind of human-bird relationships are possible at the edge of extinction? What does it mean to care for a disappearing species? What obligations do we have to hold open space in the world for other living beings?' (van Dooren 5). Woolf's essay on feathered women entangled with near-extinct birds anticipates and stories such questions, inviting us to rethink human-bird relationships, culpability for species loss, and the cost of victimising women to protect birds. As Caroline Hovanec points out, in 'the age of the sixth

mass extinction, it would be naïve to overstate the efficacy of animal stories, literary or scientific, for creating a more ethical way of living with other kinds of beings,' but it would also 'be naïve to think that any ethical or political action can happen without the sense of meaning and value that narrative brings' (203). Indeed, 'the animal subjects of modernist literature' might, 'in some small way, help story a more attentive, more loving relationship with the world that houses all our animal worlds' (Hovanec 204). Woolf's bird extinction and feathered woman narrative might story a more attentive relationship with bird-woman worlds and species loss.

Section 5.4 Feathered Women Across Woolf's Works

5.4.1 Tracing the Trope

In this section I will analyse the 'persistency of feathers' (*TL* 104) as (r)evolutionary posthuman tropes in Woolf's *The Voyage Out, Jacob's Room, Mrs. Dalloway*, and *Orlando: A Biography.* I will show how Woolf's argument moves *beyond* the imperialist feminism of her writing on the Plumage Bill, and beyond the Darwinian resonances of the plumage trade discourse, towards a posthuman celebration of feathered women. Indeed her later iterations of the Darwinian feathered woman trope recognise an 'affirmative bond that locates the subject in the flow of relations with multiple others' (Braidotti 50): birds, women, and people racialized, or classed as other. We shall see that Woolf exposes humanist civilising, binary, and animalising discourse as harmful, challenging and re-inscribing this discourse through the affirmative post-Darwinian, posthuman feathered woman trope.

The feathered woman trope not only invokes actual women wearing feather fashions; it is a trope that can be traced from Darwin and Sambourne back to *The Bible*, Ovid, and Horace. According to feminist theorist Hélène Cixous, birds and women have been 'synonym[ous]' (169) in literature since *The Bible* cast them both as abominable. In Leviticus, for example, God says to Moses and Aaron:

> You are to detest these birds. They must not be eaten because they are detestable: the eagle, the bearded vulture, the black vulture, the kite, any kind of falcon, every kind of raven, the ostrich, the short-eared owl, the gull, any kind of hawk, the little owl, the cormorant, the long-eared owl, the white owl, the desert owl, the osprey, the stork, any kind of heron, the hoopoe, and the bat (Leviticus 11:13-19 KJV 132).

Ovid's *Metamorphoses* are filled with female characters – such as Alcyone (458), Scylla (301), and Philomela and Procne (243) – transforming into birds, as well as monstrous harpies (bird-women).

Furthermore, 'Horace's famous chimaera, in the opening lines of the *Ars Poetica*, seems to prefigure Woolf's "monster' figure[s]"' (Goldman 2009 182), such as the winged worm discussed in the following chapter. Horace gives an analogy for bad poetry:

> Supposing a painter chose to put a human head on a horse's neck, or to spread feathers of various colours over the limbs of several different creatures, or to make what in the upper part is a beautiful woman tail off into a hideous fish, could you help laughing when he showed you his efforts? (Horace 1970 79).

If chimeric women covered in feathers exemplify 'serious imperfection' (Horace 1970 80) in a work, then Darwin, Sambourne, and Massingham's feathered women are no exception. Horace forbids blurring the boundaries of the 'tame' and the 'savage' (1926 450-1). The feathered woman is therefore a trope gesturing towards the laughable, the 'savage,' and 'serious imperfection' (Horace 1970 80) in the arts, including, presumably, the art of fashion, a chimera which at best disrupts the savage/civilised binary and at worst parodies (pan-

)indigenous aesthetics. There is evidently a specifically plumed manifestation of the chimeric woman running from the writings of Ovid and Horace right through to the works of Darwin, Sambourne, Massingham and Woolf.

The word feather (both a noun and a verb) can refer to the 'appendage' (an individual plume or an entire wing) of a bird, either as part of that bird's body or separate from it, and 'as a commodity,' such as a 'decoration, mark of honour' (*OED Online*), or a quill pen.[65] The word feather can also refer metonymically to the entire bird or a flock of birds. The word is embedded with slippages that evoke the unstable boundaries between subject(s) and object(s). The feather is therefore 'abject,' a term theorist Julia Kristeva calls that which disturbs the already ambiguous boundary between subject and other, between inside and outside the self or body. The abject exists 'at the border of [the subject's] condition as a living being' (Kristeva 3). And yet the beauty of feathers belies their abjection. Plumes as decorative commodities blur both human and bird bodily boundaries and raise the abject question, '[h]ow can I be without a border?' (Kristeva 4), akin to Darwinist questions about species boundaries. Woolf embraces the slippery nature and multivalence of plumage tropes as signifiers. Feathers form similes, metaphors, material references (to birds and millinery) and more, across her works, in what Paul de Man calls an 'infinite chain of tropological transformations' (1984 241). She loads the trope with some of the associations identified in the plumage trade debate – violent orientalist imperialism and Darwinian gender politics – whilst adding layers of royalist and nationalist signification. According to de Man, as we have seen, a 'trope generates a norm of value,' and tropes are 'producers of ideologies that are no longer true' (242). These ideologies include imperialism and these values include racism. We have seen too that Srivinas Aravamudan explains how racial tropes 'embody [the] tension between representational surplus and referential lack' (5). Woolf, as I demonstrate below, gestures towards this tension in *Mrs. Dalloway*. The 'unincorporated

[65] For Woolf and quills see Lowe.

and unincorporable remainder' between signifier and signified also 'allows tropes to be reappropriated by resistant positions' (Aravamudan 5), and Woolf 'turn[s]' sexist animal 'tropes to advantage' by '*re*-signifying' them (original emphasis, Goldman 2007 49, 52). This is particularly true of feathered woman tropes in *Orlando: A Biography*.

5.4.2 Imperial Plumes

I pointed earlier to the slippery historical and metonymic slide between imperialist, orientalist, and gendered feather associations, to the consistent historically violent appropriation of feathers and feather fashions from so-called Eastern peoples, and in the 1920s from colonised countries, by Europeans. Wearing feathers indicated an appropriated authority, a display of status transferred onto women whose feather fashions both signified their alignment with the appropriating coloniser and their objectification as an extension of the feather. Woolf's feathered woman tropes are full of Orientalist and racist associations. In *Orlando: A Biography*, '[s]oldiers planned the conquest of the Moor and the downfall of the Turk […] surmounted by plumes of ostrich feathers,' while in Constantinople Orlando observes 'janissaries […] waving great ostrich feathers' (*O* 33, 112-3). In *The Waves* the narrator speaks of '*a regiment of plumed and turbaned soldiers'* (original emphasis 64). These soldiers are central to Jane Marcus's claim that '*The Waves* is about imperialism' (2004 64). Woolf also compares 'English civilisation' to a 'soft feather bed' (*E*3 199), and quotes Laurence Sterne who writes of 'the young, in armour bright […] beplumed with each gay feather of the east' (*E*5 405). In *Three Guineas* Woolf uses the simile, 'decorated like a savage with feathers' (182), invoking Darwin's 'both civilised and savage' feathered women (*Descent* 408). Woolf evidently mobilises the Orientalist associations between plumes and the 'Eastern' other across her works, and as Jane Marcus puts it, 'degrees of irony […] cannot relieve [her sentences] of the burden of racism' (2004 24). While she critiqued Massingham's sexist contributions to the plumage trade debate, she perpetuates

longstanding Orientalist, Darwinian, and imperialist connotations through her feathered tropes.

Woolf appears somewhat ambivalent about (anti)imperial feminism in her early work, becoming increasingly critical in later novels. The alignment of feathers with the humanist colonising impulse, particularly in women, begins as early as Woolf's first novel *The Voyage Out* (1915), which as Beer and Davison have shown (and as I discussed in my introductory chapter), was greatly influenced by Darwin's *Journal of Researches*, its *bildungsroman* voyage plot, it's descriptions. In *The Voyage Out* the (female, though the name is unisex) character Evelyn Murgatroyd is cast as an imperialist feminist (as well as a Bolshevist and general adventurist). Addressing a man, Murgatroyd says '[i]f I were you […] I'd raise a troop and conquer some great territory and make it splendid' (*VO* 151). She appears earlier, 'with a feather drooping from a broad-brimmed hat […] like a gallant lady of the time of Charles the First leading royalist troops into action' (*VO* 142). Evelyn has fantasies that empower women through and within empire, over the landscape introduced to Woolf by Darwin, and in line with the ideology of imperial feminism. Woolf is here, as Jane Marcus puts it, 'ambivalent about feminist imperialists, who retain their stature as adventurous women whilst simultaneously serving as reminders of the horrors of empire and Englishwomen's complicity in it' (2004 10). In a similar image, an unnamed 'old dame' steps out in *Mrs. Dalloway* with 'three purple ostrich feathers in her hair' (139), which gesture towards the Prince of Wales's crest, and the ostrich feather trade. Likewise, her short story 'Scenes from the Life of a British Naval Officer' (1931) features a 'photograph of a lady's head surmounted by three ostrich feathers' (*CSF* 226). The layering of feather signification with royalist and colonising impulses onto female characters evidently recurs through Woolf's feather motifs. Tracing the feathered woman trope allows us to put Woolf's texts from across her oeuvre in conversation and identify the colonial complicity that

underwrites her feathered female characters, and that exposes the contradictions of British imperial feminism in the posthuman critique of her later works.

5.4.3 India and Plumage in *Jacob's Room* and *Mrs. Dalloway*

Conservationist, (anti)imperialist, and sexist discourse converges through the 'black' feathered woman trope, as it did in 'The Plumage Bill,' in *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925). In the novel, Woolf's interest in feathers reveals an empathy for animals and animalised others from a position of shared 'otherness' with women, including working class women and women of colour. As such, Woolf's approach here points towards a posthuman feminist opposition to the plumage trade, one more complex that the stance outlined in her Plumage Bill essay, and goes beyond the Darwinian resonances of plumage discourse. Woolf scholar Supriya Chaudhuri argues that 'India is the absent centre in Woolf's fiction, a space left behind or travelled to […] a recurrent and powerful trope in the novels' (455). Anglo-Indian administrators frequently occur, and are undercut, throughout Woolf's oeuvre. In *The Waves*, Percival, the 'hero' (72) capable of solving 'The Oriental problem' (79), dies in India when his horse trips over a molehill. One of the narrators in *A Room of One's Own* attributes her privilege as a woman of means, like Woolf's own, to an inheritance from an aunt who 'died by a fall from her horse […] in Bombay' (29), and 'forever marks,' as Jane Marcus puts it, the 'English woman writer as implicated in colonialism' (2004 19). India was also an absent centre in Woolf's life. Her family had a history of colonial administration in India as we have seen, and her husband Leonard Woolf spent seven years in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) as a civil servant. The Woolfs also published anti-imperialist books through the Hogarth Press (Chaudhuri 456), and Leonard Woolf has been called 'one of the foremost anti-imperialists of the interwar period' (Snaith 2014, 19). The Woolfs had a complex relationship with empire.

South Asia is a key topic in *Mrs. Dalloway*, in which several characters have travelled to India, Ceylon, or Burma, including the botanist Helena Parry, Millicent Bruton who was 'rumoured to have order[d] British troops to advance upon an historical occasion' (90), and Peter Walsh, to whom Clarissa 'owed' the word 'civilised' (31). Bruton thinks 'what a tragedy it was – the state of India!' (153), and Walsh wonders '[w]hat did the Government mean […] to do about India?' (136). Although the characters are often thinking or 'talking about India' (156), these thoughts and conversations are rarely explicitly reported. If India is an absent centre in the novel, so too perhaps, in a different but related way, might plumage politics form an undercurrent to the narrative. Several characters in *Mrs. Dalloway* are aligned with plumage politics in different ways. Hugh Whitbread is a Massingham-like conservationist figure who 'possessed – no one could doubt it – the art of writing letters to *The Times*' (93). Indeed, 'one or two humble reforms stood to his credit' including 'the protection of owls in Norfolk' and 'his name at the end of letters to *The Times*, asking for funds, appealing to the public to protect, to preserve' (87), although according to Richard Dalloway these letters are 'all stuffing and bunkum' (93) and 'writing a letter to *The Times* […] was all Hugh was fit for' (101). The novel features feathered female consumers, 'Lady Bradshaw in ostrich feathers' (86) and Mrs. Dalloway wearing 'a feathered yellow hat' (26), which recall Lady So-and-so with 'a lemon-coloured egret in her hair' (*E*3 242) and a milliner, Rezia Warren Smith, who arranges feathers on hats (*MD* 74). The novel names over twenty bird species and compares several characters to birds: Clarissa to 'the jay' (3), Rezia to a 'hen' (126), while Septimus (124) and Peter Walsh (139) are hawk-like. The novel's characters are aligned with birds at various stages of the plumage process, including live bird, hat making, and feather wearing. Jane Garrity accuses Woolf of 'proclaiming the innocence' of women in 'The Plumage Bill' (75). In *Mrs. Dalloway*, however, characters have varied relations to the trade, complicating the binary politics and innocent women of Woolf's early essay.

Woolf blurs bird/women boundaries through the feathered woman trope in *Jacob's Room* (1922), which she was writing when she composed 'The Plumage Bill.' She noted in her diary (July 1920): 'Three weeks I think have passed without a word added to Jacob. […] Yet its [sic] all my fault […] why take up the Plumage Bill for Ray [Strachey]?' (*D*2 53). Plumage politics are evident in *Jacob's Room*:

> In Evelina's shop off Shaftesbury Avenue the parts of a woman were shown separate. In the left hand was her skirt. Twining round a pole in the middle was a feather boa. Ranged like the heads of malefactors on Temple Bar were hats – emerald and white, lightly wreathed or drooping beneath deep-dyed feathers (166-7).

Here the composite 'parts of a woman' include a spine-like feather boa and 'deep-dyed feathers' (166, 167). The very consumer of plumage becomes a malefactor, an abject bird-woman in a shop window, compartmentalised into a series of 'separate' commercial products. The display presents the consumer as a commodity to be consumed, a composite figure part-bird, part-woman, much like Darwin's and Sambourne's women in feather fashions.

A similar, more complex scene in *Mrs. Dalloway* casts Peter Walsh as the consumer of the feathered woman. This scene draws together a specifically racialized, imperialist form of plumed objectification, and is the point at which Woolf's feminist, conservationist, and Indian discourse converge in the novel. The scene features a young woman who is 'black, but enchanting' (45), a phrase which according to Stuart Clarke suggests indicates a maid wearing black (33) and which I suggest could mean that she is a woman of colour. Both are discursive others. Woolf keeps both options in play. Furthermore, the passage may allude to the line 'I am black, but comely' from the Song of Solomon (1.5) in the Old Testament,

another potential racialisation of the woman (*MD* EN 47:28 23).[66] This 'black but enchanting' (45) woman is an example of racial (and classed) tropes that 'embody [the] tension between representational surplus and referential lack' (Aravamudan 5) in the novel.

Peter follows the woman down the pointedly named Cockspur Street:

> He pursued; she changed. There was colour in her cheeks; mockery in her eyes; he was an adventurer, reckless, he thought, swift, daring, indeed (landed as he was last night from India) a romantic buccaneer, careless of all these damned proprieties […] pipes, fishing-rods, in the shop windows […] He was a buccaneer. On and on she went […] ahead of him, her cloak, her gloves, her shoulders combining with the fringes and the laces and the feather boas in the windows (45-46).

Pursued by this Anglo-Indian imperialist, the woman undergoes a transformation from eroticised racialised/classed other to colonised, commodified and feathered object, abject behind glass, her clothes and body 'combining with the fringes and the laces and the feather boas in the windows' (46). As Jane Marcus puts it '[t]he empire is run by this marginal daydreaming anxious ladies' man' (2004, 69) in a 'mass delusion of grandeur and racial and class superiority' (71). Peter's 'romantic' (46) vision of buccaneering is exposed for what it is: a fantasy of dominion in which women, servants, people of colour, and animals are interchangeable, but always subjected to 'the instinct for possession' (*AROO* 30). Indeed, we might even read Darwin into this scene, as a buccaneer plundering the globe for (often feathered) specimens during his *Beagle* voyage. Woolf's feathered woman trope undergoes 'tropological transformations' (de Man 241) from ambivalence in *The Voyage Out*, towards

[66] This is my only reference to the Cambridge edition of *Mrs Dalloway*; all other references are to the Oxford edition.

imperialist feminism in 'The Plumage Bill,' and later a critique of humanist othering and objectification.

5.4.4 Pluming *Orlando: A Biography*

Woolf not only critiques humanist, imperialist, and sexist Darwinian feathered woman tropes, she also stories (anticipating van Dooren) Braidotti's affirmative politics of 'alternative visions' of species relations (54). *Orlando: A Biography* offers perhaps the most explicit, (r)evolutionary posthumanist feminist celebration of feathered women in her works. Woolf re-signifies Massingham's dangerously vain plumed woman as a joyous trope. Feminist theorist Hélène Cixous aligns 'women and birds as synonyms' as mutually abominable beings in Biblical discourse (169). Cixous translates the Biblical use of the word *imund* – as 'unclean' (167), 'impure' (168), 'abominable' (167), 'exiled' (173) or 'out-of-the-world' (171) – establishing a 'chain of associations and signifiers composed of birds, women and writing' (167), all of which she claims are *imund.* We have seen that Darwin, Sambourne, Massingham and Woolf have written in the tradition of abject, *imund* bird-women. Cixous says 'Joy,' is also 'out-of-the-world' (171). She aims to tunnel down to the joy at 'the root' (171) of the *imund*, celebrating 'birds, women and writing' (167), which gather in 'the nether realms' (169). In *Orlando: A Biography*, birds, women, and writing gather in these nether realms, united by the trope of the feather in *imund* joy, and this joy re-signifies the feathered woman trope by storying an affirmative posthuman, post-Darwinian politics.

In *Orlando: A Biography*, the young, aristocratic Elizabethan protagonist starts the narrative as a male, quill-wielding racist 'slicing at the head of a Moor' (*O* 13). As Jane Marcus puts it, '*Orlando* writes the history of English Literature based on a founding gesture of violence and conquest' (2004 66). At first, Orlando associates plumes with horses, fans, and Orientalist, aristocratic visions of Turks and janissaries in ostrich feathers (*O* 33, 112-

3). As a man, Orlando uses an 'old stained goose quill' (16) – an abjected and appropriated bird body part – to write his poem 'The Oak Tree' and funds the plumage trade directly by 'import[ing] fowl with gay plumage' (102). Halfway through the narrative, however, Orlando transforms into a woman, and has a visionary marriage-to-nature scene where she 'marries' a moor, a British landscape punning perhaps on the first Moor, that therefore gesture towards miscegenation. She does so whilst covered in the cast-off feathers of native, wild, living birds, offering a queer model for the co-existence of birds and women. Orlando casts aside her own quill, completing her poem soon afterwards.

Orlando's plumes take on different associations from Woolf's other feathered woman tropes, or indeed any of Darwins, but still carry nationalist undertones. Orlando's marriage-to-nature scene features seven uses of the word feather across two pages (225-6). She walks in the park alone but for 'the rooks flaunting in the sky' (225). Then:

> A steel-blue plume from one of them fell among the heather. She loved wild bird's feathers. She had used to collect them as a boy. She picked it up and stuck it in her hat. The air blew upon her spirit somewhat and revived it (225).

Woolf's use of the pronoun 'it' in the last sentence operates as both deictic and zeugma allowing us to read both Orlando's spirit and the feather as having 'revived' (225). There is a striking contrast between the revived spirit-plume of native living rooks, and the imported plumage of exotic dead birds used to display imperial status in her other works. The rooks go 'whirling and wheeling above' Orlando as 'feather after feather [falls] gleaming through the purplish air' (225). Woolf scholar Ian Blyth argues that from her childhood onwards, Woolf associated rooks with rural Englishness. Her writings 'throng with rooks,' which are 'perhaps the most British of all birds' (80). The rooks in *Orlando: A Biography* evoke a localised form of Woolf's 'complex relation to the *nation*, to the concept of *Englishness*'

(original emphases McVicker 2007 219), one that does not require the global trade of dead exotic birds to plume women.

Orlando's feathery marriage scene enacts a form of mythopoeia that twists classical sexual narratives to feminist advantage. The scene has erotic overtones: she 'pressed [the feathers] to her lips to feel their smooth, glinting plumage' (*O* 225). A 'single feather quivered in the air and fell' (225) into a pool, recalling Cupid's quiver of plumed arrows. Indeed, 'some strange ecstasy came over her. Some wild notion she had of following the birds to the rim of the world' (225). This ecstasy anticipates Cixous' 'out-of-the-world' (171) 'nether realms' (169). Orlando lies on the ground 'giving herself in rapture' to the moor, *imund* with joy as 'nature's bride' (225). Later, she marries the feminine, *imund* Shelmerdine, or 'Shel' (300) (recall my discussion of the shell trope in my first two chapters – he evokes the Darwinian and primordial), whose name is 'wild, dark-plumed' like 'rooks' wings' (229).

Orlando has 'found a greener laurel than the bay […] wild birds' feathers' (226). Woolf rejects the classical narrative in which 'Daphne flying' – a myth played out on Orlando's tapestry – becomes a laurel tree to escape being raped by Apollo (*O* 158). Woolf 'would have been aware' of how Andrew Marvell's metaphysical poem 'The Garden' – where 'Apollo hunted Daphne so, / Only that she might laurel grow' (Marvell 157) – 'explicitly connects male pastoral ease' with 'the absence of women' (Stewart 32), just as it reports the hunt of Daphne. Woolf opts, instead of such violence, for an erotics which does not require the pursuit or sacrifice of women or their 'synonyms' (Cixous 169), birds. Woolf's mythopoeia twists the 'tropological chain of transformations' (de Man 241) to advantage through Orlando's *imund* metamorphosis into a feathered woman. The plumes in *Orlando: A Biography*, whilst still loaded with nationalist signification, are re-inscribed to point towards co-existence between living women and birds, eroticism, and emancipation from heteronormative behaviour. Woolf 'turn[s] to advantage' (Goldman 2007 49) the

monstrous Darwinian feathered woman trope through this celebratory feathering. This twist is posthuman and imagines a (r)evolutionary 'affirmative bond that locates the subject in the flow of relations with multiple others' (Braidotti 50). Feathered women are evidently significant tropes in Woolf's writing, tropes that evolve from Darwinian and imperial feminist signifiers, into figures that gesture towards posthumanist feminism and story new bird-woman relations in Woolf's writing.

I hope to have demonstrated that there were three key contexts underpinning the discourse of the plumage bill debate which have previously been overlooked by Woolf scholars: British imperialist discourse, the *Darwinian* feathered woman trope (shaped by and shaping his understanding of sexual agency), and Darwin's work on extinction, all evident in the *Descent of Man*. I have shown that this Darwinian feathered woman trope was popularised by *Punch* magazine, and central to the plumage bill debate, which largely held women who wore feather fashions culpable for bird species loss. Woolf, we have seen, engaged with these discursive contexts, and subverted the trope of the feathered woman in both her British imperialist leaning essay, 'The Plumage Bill,' and in the p(r)evolutionary, posthuman, (anti)imperialist, post-Darwinian iterations of the trope in her later works. Woolf 'brandish[es] her plumes' (*MD* 118) at Darwin, at the misogyny of Massingham's bird protectionism, and at species loss, storying posthuman celebrations of bird-woman affinities. In the following chapter I shall consider another iteration of the feathered woman, the bird-like Mrs Martin, who stands behind the monstrous figure of the winged worm.

Chapter Six

The (R)evolutionary Politic Worm

Section 6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 Decomposition, Recomposition, Renewal

In her *Reading Notebook* (c.1939-1940), Woolf writes that the 'point of view of any individual is bound to be not a birds eye view but an insects eye view [sic]' – the rest of her entry considers Hitlerism and the relation of women 'to war and society' (*RN* 116, 117, Murray 1). In this final chapter, I too am shifting from the avian, with sweeping views of plumes across Woolf's works, to the invertebrate, specifically the worm, and its alignment with Hitlerism, women, war, and society. Worms are not insects but invertebrates. That said, my term worm trope also refers to vermicular insects which are often called worms – I discuss taxonomic and linguistic slippages in the word worm below – such as silk moth caterpillars. This is my final case study supporting the key claim of this thesis: that Woolf engaged with Darwin's work more extensively and subversively than previously recognised, evidenced by the politics of her Darwinian animal tropes. Much modernist writing on insects and invertebrates, as Rachel Murray explains, 'explore[s] the notion that the decomposition of existing forms may be the key to their renewal' (9). This is particularly true of worm tropes as we shall see, where for women and invertebrates the figurative and literal transition from caterpillar to moth is at stake. Woolf teaches us, in Woolf studies and in animal studies more broadly, through her Darwinian animal tropes – reproductive, canine, plumed, vermicular, and more – that the decomposition and *re*-composition (composting if you will) of animal tropes is key to their formal, political, and aesthetic renewal. Her worms, we shall see, teach us about feminist pacifism.

In *The Formation of Vegetable Mould through the Action of Worms* (1881, hereafter *Worms*), Darwin called worms 'small agencies,' 'low in scale,' but of 'some interest' (2, 93). This chapter investigates the feminist, pacifist, and anti-fascist politics of worm tropes in Woolf's two major feminist polemics *A Room of One's Own* (1929) and *Three Guineas* (1938), through the lens of Darwin's writing on worms in his *Journal of Researches* (1839) and *Worms.* First, I will unearth theories of worm and caterpillar troping by Janelle Schwartz, Rachel Murray, and others, outlining my theoretical framework. Second, I will argue that Woolf's striking description of woman as 'a worm winged like an eagle' (*AROO* 34) re-composes Darwin's discussion of worms and women's faculties in *Worms*, turning the Darwinian worm trope to (r)evolutionary feminist advantage. Third, I will consider how Woolf's 'worm […] creature, Dictator' (*TG* 135) speaks to Darwin's fascination with the 'extraordinary' Argentinian dictator Juan Manuel de Rosas, whom he met during his *Beagle* voyage, and whom he aligned with vermicular sea-pens in his *Journal of Researches* (71). I will argue for the levelling, pacifist, and regenerative potential of Woolf's dictator worm trope. Finally, I will analyse Woolf's silkworm and mulberry tree imagery in *Three Guineas* in relation to Darwin's work on silkworms and Third Reich sericulture discourse. Scholars such as Christina Alt (2010 192), Alison Lacivita (11-13), Harvena Richter (21), and Rachel Sarsfield (2003, 2004) have previously read Woolf's silkworm imagery as symbolic of female oppression and creativity.[67] I, however, will argue that her polemics intimately connect worm and vermicular tropes (earthworms, sea-pens, glow-worms, and silkworms) to Darwinian and Third Reich sericulture discourse. In sum, I argue that Woolf refigures Darwinian and Third Reich worm tropes as affirmative feminist, pacifist and anti-fascist signifiers, whose recomposition enables their formal, political, and aesthetic renewal.

We have seen that Woolf scholarship on Darwin predominantly focuses on her first and last novels in connection with Darwin's *Journal of Researches*. I have spent the last

[67] The worm trope invites phallic readings but these are not the concern of this thesis.

three chapters focusing on Woolf's engagement with *The Descent of Man* (1871) through canine and feather tropes. I am revisiting the *Journal* and considering *Worms* here as Woolf alludes to both in her feminist polemics, and because Woolf scholars have not investigated the Darwinian aspects of these texts. As such, I reveal worm trope connections, intertexts and historical references between *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas*, whilst bearing in mind the implications of troping for animals and women. If animal tropes 'operate as symbolic repositories for human actions, human figures, and human anxieties' including 'monsters, racial others, and women' (Oritz Robles 23), then Woolf's Darwinian worm tropes are repositories for at least two politically charged human anxieties: concern's surrounding women's intellectual and creative capabilities, and concerns regarding the connection between fascist societies and animalised women. These animal tropes, then, speak to the wider concerns of this thesis, raising important ethical questions about the 'consequences of our literarization of the animal,' for animals (including animalised humans) which are 'all too real and significant to ignore' (Oritz Robles 25). Worm figures have the (r)evolutionary power to undermine and recompose the edifices and tropes of human language.

6.1.2 Worm Theory

Let me outline a few worm theories. Worms are a rich trope due to their organic and symbolic potential to create regeneration from decay. The word worm is linguistically unstable and is often applied to insect species, not just invertebrates: silkworms are in fact silk-moth caterpillars; Darwin's ocean worms are really sea-pens; glow-worms are beetles; and earthworms fall into the category of entomology, despite not being *entomon*, that is, divided into segments (Schwartz xviii, Aristotle 1910 1065). Earthworms are excluded altogether from the Linnaean classification of the term insect (Murray 11). This linguistic instability gives worms the potential to turn and to cast up soil for analysis. Indeed, Murray asserts that

insects and worms 'exceed and confound the meanings that we attribute to them, functioning as unstable signifiers that continually thwart our human designs' (12). Recent worm theory offers fertile ground for a feminist approach to this topic: in Jane Bennett tells 'worm stories' (95) about these small 'actants' (94); Haraway reveals the tentacular interconnectedness of human and non-human critters in *Staying with the Trouble* (2016); and the title figure in Cixous's 'Laugh of the Medusa' has dangerously vermicular serpent hair.[68] For the purposes of this chapter I will focus on Janelle Schwartz's *Worm Work* (2012), Rachel Murray's *The Modernism Exoskeleton* (2020), and research on Woolf's worms by Jane Goldman and Rachel Sarsfield.

This thesis has engaged with the animal turn in modernist studies and Woolf studies. There has also been an insect turn in modernist and animal studies. Recent scholarship has 'identifie[d] a sustained preoccupation with insects in modernist writing' shaped by 'popular studies of entomology which proliferated in the early decades of the twentieth century' (Murray 3). These insects and invertebrates include earthworms and silkworms. H.D.'s works are a 'cocoon-blur,' a 'silken mesh' (1968 96, 114), of 'cocoon state[s]' (H.D. 1992 179) loaded with what Murray calls 'pupal provisionality' (Murray 13). Other modernists were likewise drawn to the provisionality of chrysalis figuration. Djuna Barnes spent over twenty years spinning her silkworm poem 'Rite of Spring' (Kalaidjian 65), in which the chrysalis is both a shroud and a space to 're-consider':

> Man cannot purge his body of its theme,
> As can the silkworm, on a running thread,
> Spin a shroud to re-consider in (Barnes np, Kalaidjian 65).

[68] For more worm theory see: Phillips (1999), Griffiths (2015), and Derrida's 'A Silkworm of One's Own' (1996).

Beckett increasingly alludes to the 'worm state' (Beckett 1995 278), Murray explains, and refers directly to Darwin's description of a caterpillar interrupted in weaving a chrysalis as 'much embarrassed' (*Origin* 156, Murray 131-155). In his short story 'Echo's Bones' (1933), one character says 'I'll have to be like the embarrassed caterpillar and go back to my origins' (2014 42) while in *Watt* (1953) Mr Magershon says, '[g]o on from where you left off . . . Or are you like Darwin's caterpillar?' (2009 194). In each case the chrysalis formation stage is associated with the provisional. Indeed, Woolf's worms may well anticipate the 'vermicular rhythms' of Beckett's post-war writing (Murray 141). Modernist imagery is, Murray argues, 'able to house multiple, at times conflicting, associations, allowing meanings to coexist' (116), and insects and invertebrates can help to focalise literary modernism's 'reflexive attention to its own form' and impulse to 'unmake and remake itself anew' (12-13). This is true, I argue, of the multivalency and slippages inherent in the trope as form, and Woolf's re-composition of animal tropes.

Insects were prevalent in Woolf's life and writing. We saw in chapter one that, as a child, Woolf often hunted insects with her brother Thoby, and established a family 'Entomological Society' (*MB* 116) which displayed specimens in the 'family Museum' (*L*1 2). Between 1922 and 1933, more than 140 short nature documentaries were screened in British cinemas during the 'Secrets of Nature' educational film series, including many on insects, and 'at least six films devoted solely to lepidoptera,' offering audiences 'an unprecedented insight into the formation of the cocoon' (Murray 99-100). The London Film Society, where Woolf watched *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari*, 'screened a range of avant-garde films alongside early nature documentaries, including 'The Comma Butterfly' and 'The Dysticus and Its Larvae" (Scott 44, Murray 104). Woolf may well have attended these screenings and learned about the life cycle of the insect. There have been recent theses on Woolf and insects (Sarsfield 2004 and Robinson 2000), as well as Murray's monograph on modernism and insects (2020), Mark Dion's 2018 talk on Woolf and insects on BBC Radio

3, Benjamin Bagocius' essay on butterflies as queer signifiers of maleness across Woolf's works, and Christina Alt's discussion of Woolf and insects in *Virginia Woolf and the Study of Nature* (2006).[69] Woolf's butterfly and moth imagery has been read in a 'broadly symbolic vein' (Alt 2010 192), often as a metaphor for women's creative process (Lacivita 11-13, Richter 21, and Sarsfield 2003, 2004). I focus instead in the intersecting Darwinian, feminist, and anti-fascist provenance of Woolf's worms.

Worms appear in literature as early as the Bible, Homer's *Iliad*, Pliny's *Natural History*, and Aristotle's *Basic Works*, where they predominantly consume human bodies, creating the potential for regeneration from decay (Schwartz 203). According to Apollonian myths the 'source of Western lyric poetry,' Goldman argues (1998 95) is the destruction of Apollo's enemy, the great dragon Python (Goldman 1998 94). This python, also cast as a dragon or worm, was, as Goldman explains, 'female in the earliest accounts of the conflict' (1998 94). The worm is also female in later ballads, such as that of the laily or laidly worm. In these ballads, however, the hero does not kill his pythonic worm sister: 'He quitted his sword, he bent his bow, / He gave her kisses three; / She crept into a hole a worm, / But stept out a lady' (Anon 1861 312-313).[70] This gendering of the worm as female (they are actually hermaphrodites) continues through various vermicular myths (Medusa, Hydra), the Bible ('worm, *Thou art* my mother, and my sister,' KJV Job 17 620), and even Erasmus Darwin's poetry ('thy sister Worms!' (*The Temple of Nature* 70)). *The Temple of Nature*, according to Schwartz, discloses his 'vision of organic wholeness in the natural world as an essentially vermicular activity' (xxii). William Blake, who was commissioned to make engravings for Erasmus Darwin's *The Loves of Plants* (Schwartz 124), also sexes worms as female in *Jerusalem: The Emanation of the Giant Albion* (1804–20): the fictional Vala is 'a shade of

[69] For more on Woolf and insects see: Brown, Burstein, Dubino 2013, Faris, Fleishman, Fleming, Froula, Henry, Pelton, and Scott. On modernism and insects see: Connor 2000 and 2014, Botar and Wünsche, Sultzbach 2016, and McCarthy.

[70] See Goldman on variants of this ballad as intertexts for Woolf's 1920 short story 'A Women's College from Outside' (*CSF* 145-149, Goldman 2020 29).

sweet repose: / But animated and vegetated, she is a devouring worm' (Blake 654, 764). (I discuss Blake further below).[71] Worms, then, are historically figured as female and monstrous.

In *Worm Work*, Janelle Schwartz coins the term 'VermiCulture' (xx), which theorises the worm as signifier. She demonstrates the:

> [D]eveloping aesthetic imaginary from the mid-eighteenth to nineteenth centuries, rooted […] in the very material processes of decay and degeneration. From the time of Erasmus Darwin to that of Charles Darwin, worms were recognized as much for their literal ability to break down and cast up organic structures as for their figurative utility (xv).

The Darwinian worm trope then, points towards decay, regeneration and 'the need to rebuild meaning' (Schwartz xv). This new meaning has feminist potential according to Goldman, who claims that a 'version of Darwin's earthworm which brings out its original associations with the feminine would be useful to feminism' (1998 96). Where Goldman explores dragon and piscine manifestations of the worm trope, I will show that Woolf utilizes and recomposes gendered (often invoking male dictators and female silkworm breeders) earthworm, sea-pen, and silkworm imagery in ways 'useful to feminism,' as well as pacifism and anti-fascism.

6.1.3 Darwin's Worms

Darwin was fascinated by worms throughout his career, despite considering them 'low in the scale of organization' (*Worms* 3), for 'no one probably will dispute that the butterfly is higher than the caterpillar' (*Origin* 324). The structure of this seemingly hierarchical and linear scale (he often ranked species from civilized man, then so-called savage, down to the

[71] See Schwartz on Miltonic worms and the 'Blakean worm' (114).

higher and then lower animals) is complicated by his belief that the difference between species was one of degree rather than kind, levelling these ranked distinctions. It is also complicated by his famous claim in *On the Origin of Species* (1859) that ecosystems form a lateral, 'inextricable web of affinities' (319):

> It is interesting to contemplate an entangled bank, clothed with many plants of many kinds, with birds singing in the bushes, with various insects flitting about, and with worms crawling through the damp earth, and to reflect that these elaborately constructed forms, so different from each other, and dependent on each other in so complex a manner, have all been produced by laws acting around us (360).

Worms, then, were low on the evolutionary scale, and central to his understanding of a complex ecosystem of interdependent species, a web that both reinforces and destabilizes hierarchical categorizations. In 1837, Darwin gave a talk on worms at the Geological Society of London, concluding that all vegetable mould on earth had likely 'passed through the intestines of worms' (qtd in Beer 1995 238). His final book, *Worms* (1881), published six months before he died, had an 'enthusiastic reception,' sold 8,500 copies between November 1881 and February 1884, and, as Gillian Beer notes, 'went on outselling all his other works' (1995 220). In it, he called worms 'small agencies,' of 'some interest,' and said he 'doubted whether there are many other animals which have played so important a part in the history of the world' (*Worms* 313).

Darwin's study of earthworms was based on global correspondence – with scientists, gardeners, missionaries, travellers, naturalists, and collectors (Richards xxviii) – , close study of worms in pots kept in his home Down House in Kent, and observations made at

Knole Park in Sussex, the ancestral home of the Sackville-Wests and the basis for the Orlando's estate in *Orlando: A Biography* (1928). Darwin:

> wished to learn how far [worms] acted consciously, and how much mental power they displayed [...] as few observations of this kind have been made, as far as I know, on animals so low in the scale of organisation and so poorly provided with sense-organs, as are earth-worms (*Worms* 3).

In his attempts to elicit sensory responses from worms, he played them the bassoon, waved a red-hot poker at them, and breathed chewed tobacco over them. One particularly striking finding was that in the act of regenerating the topsoil worms were capable of 'undermin[ing],' burying, and thereby preserving great man-made edifices such as Stonehenge (*Worms* 154). Darwin detailed the ways in which 'worms have played a considerable part in the burial and concealment of several Roman and other buildings in England' (*Worms* 228) and noted that 'many monoliths and some old walls have fallen down from having been undermined by worms,' as they 'prepare the ground … for seedlings of all kinds' (*Worms* 308-9). Darwin was interested, then, in how destruction conserves and 'in the kind of life destruction makes possible' (Phillips 63). These biological worms were, however, perceived as a symbolic threat to hierarchical order and human achievement by Darwin's contemporaries. Several of Edward Linley Sambourne's illustrations in the satirical magazine *Punch* lampooned *Worms.* 'Man is But a Worm,' published in December 1881, depicted the evolution of man from a worm to Darwin himself (np), and *Punch's* 'Fancy Portrait' of Darwin (October 22 1881), featured a worm shaped like a question mark, accompanied by text claiming that Darwin had 'brought his own species down as low as possible' (Sambourne 190). Darwin's worms were evolutionary, (r)evolutionary, and regenerative.

Section 6.2 ‘A Worm Winged like an Eagle’

6.2.1 An Odd Monster

I will now discuss the feminist and Darwinian provenance of Woolf’s striking description of woman as ‘a worm winged like an eagle’ (*AROO* 34). In Woolf’s polemic, her narrator visits the British Museum in order to address numerous questions she has about women and fiction. After reading a selection of history and literature she concludes:

> A very queer, composite being thus emerges. Imaginatively she is of the highest importance; practically she is completely insignificant. […] Some of the most inspired words, some of the most profound thoughts in literature fall from her lips; in real life she could hardly read, could scarcely spell, and was the property of her husband.
>
> It was certainly an odd monster that one made up by reading the historians first and the poets afterwards, a worm winged like an eagle; the spirit of life and beauty in a kitchen chopping up suet (*AROO* 33-34).

One intertext for this winged worm appears later in the same narrative, when Woolf quotes poet Mary Cavendish, who says that ‘women live like Bats or Owls, labour like Beasts, and die like worms’ (*AROO* 56). Worms in *A Room of One’s Own* then, are twice bound to the disconnect between women’s lives and women’s artistic and literary representation. Further intertexts for Woolf’s winged worm include Blake’s (male) ‘invisible worm / That flies in the night’ from ‘The Sick Rose’ (Blake 49), the ‘cut worm forgives the plough’ from his ‘Proverbs of Hell’ (893), *Albrecht Dürer*’s *Melancholia* (Goldman 2009), and the worm with

'limber fans / For wings' in Milton's *Paradise Lost* (172).[72] My focus, however, is on Darwin's worms, which I posit as a possible intertext to Woolf's remarkable chimeric image.

We saw in the previous chapter that Horace's figure of the feathered chimaera in the *Ars Poetica*, in his explanation of bad poetry, seems to 'prefigure' Woolf's 'monstrous figures' (Goldman 2009 182). Horace's chimaera might involve spreading 'feathers of various colours over the limbs of several different creatures' or combining a 'beautiful woman' with a 'hideous fish' (Horace 1970, 79). Woolf's winged worm as a figure for women misrepresented by writers and historians points towards these is 'hideous' fish (the worm is synonymous with the python, dragon, and *fish*), revealing that, according to Horace's standards, historical and literary representations of women, largely by men, constitute a chimeric 'serious imperfection' (Horace 1970 80) in literature.

Although Woolf's library did not hold a copy of Darwin's book on earthworms, it did hold an issue of *The Spectator* from 1888 which contains an article on 'Mr. Darwin […] who does nothing but stroll, and think, and count worms!' (Anon 4 Feb 1888 12). One of Woolf's key resources for her writing, as discussed in chapter two, the *Dictionary of National Biography*, also discusses Darwin's worm book. The entry on Darwin states that the value of *Worms* 'was at once recognised by scientific opinion, and it proved to be widely popular' (Stephen and Lee 1888 80). Indeed, Leslie Stephen wrote elsewhere that 'Darwin had none but kindly feelings for worms' (1986 200). Furthermore, both Reginald Snell's *Darwin* (1937), published by Hogarth the year before *Three Guineas*, and Henrietta (née Darwin) Litchfield's *Emma Darwin, Wife of Charles Darwin: A Century of Family Letters by her Daughter* (1904), gifted to Woolf (King and Miletic-Vejzovic np), discuss Darwin's work on worms (Snell 66, Emma Darwin 307). In the latter Emma observes that earthworms 'can neither see nor hear' (307). This all suggests Woolf's likely familiarity with Darwin's

[72] The common belief that earthworms are capable of scissiparity (the reproduction of elementary organisms by splitting into two distinct parts) is inaccurate (Murray 150).

book on earthworms and the potential of worms, both literal and figurative, to level even as they bring about regeneration, inviting further analysis of her worm imagery.

6.2.2 Feminised Blindness and Book Worms

The one thing that 'surprised' Darwin 'more than anything else in regard to worms' was the discovery of their intelligence (*Worms* 35). Examples of this include the manner in which they stopped their burrows, their ability to recognise shapes, and their delayed response to light when their attention was focussed elsewhere (for example mating or eating), all of which indicated presence of mind. Their intelligence was partly surprising to Darwin because he had established that worms could neither see nor hear. I am particularly interested in a problematic analogy Darwin draws between worms and Laura Bridgman (1829-1889), an intellectual who could also neither see nor hear. He states:

> Although worms are so remarkably deficient in the several sense-organs, this does not necessarily preclude intelligence, as we know from such cases as those of Laura Bridgman […] attention indicates the presence of mind of some kind (*Worms* 34).

Bridgman was the first deaf and blind American woman to learn to communicate using finger spelling and the written word (long before the famous Helen Keller). She went on to study history, literature, mathematics and philosophy. Charles Dickens met her when she was twelve years old and wrote about her in his *American Notes for General Circulation* (1842), calling her 'radiant with intelligence and pleasure' (Dickens 39). That Darwin mentions her without further explanation indicates that she was well known at the time. Her literacy levels, let alone her scholarly abilities, combined with her blindness and deafness were remarkable to her contemporaries.

Blindness in literature has long served figurative functions. In classical mythology, the prophet Tiresias's powers seem inseparable from his blindness. On the other hand, in Milton's *Lycidas* (1638), blindness is associated with corruption in church. His greedy bishops have 'Blind mouths! that scarce themselves know how to hold / A sheep-hook' (Milton 2003 42). It is perhaps these blind mouths Blake evokes in his critique of organised religion in 'The Sick Rose,' when he writes of the parasitic 'invisible worm / That flies in the night' (Blake 49). That Milton was a source for Darwin and Woolf's writing is well-known. It is the *Lycidas* manuscript, for example, that the speaker in *A Room of One's Own* wishes to see when she is refused entry to the library because she is a woman (*AROO* 6), and Darwin 'always chose Milton' (*Autobiographies* 48) when taking a book ashore during his *Beagle* voyage. Blindness, then, would have carried literary, mythical, and religious associations for both Darwin and Woolf. But it is the gendering of blindness and worms that interests me here.

In *Blindness and Writing* (2017), Heather Tilley states that '[b]lindness assumed new meanings through its relationship to literacy in the nineteenth century' and 'had important implications for the ways in which 'sighted' writers invoked blindness in their texts' (3). She explains that this was due to the '[d]evelopment of raised print and finger reading in the 1820s onwards in Britain' (4). Tilley adds that 'the relationship between blindness and writing was gendered, as the material practises of literary production and reception (such as the roles of originator of literature vs transcriber or amanuensis) were coded as variously masculine and feminine' (6). There were exceptions, such as the celebrated eighteenth century blind Scottish poet Thomas Blacklock, but Tilley argues that this gendering was largely the rule. We might think of the 'popular image of Milton dictating *Paradise Lost* to his daughters,' which, she argues, suggests that the 'creative mind, gendered as masculine, overwhelms the feminine, capable only of copying' (10). Comparably, Darwin's 'habit was for his wife Emma to read from a novel to him each day' (Beer 1983 254). Darwin himself

famously used the human eye as an example of something that seems too perfect to have been evolved rather than created (*Origin* 140). The gendering of blindness, then, was discursively associated with male genius and female facilitation in Darwin's time.

The comparison between Bridgman and the worm does several things. Firstly, it denigrates Bridgman to the status of lowly creature, by virtue, it seems, of her sex and faculties. It also elevates the intellect of the worm to near-human, or at least near-woman. Simultaneously, the claim that, like worms, Bridgman does not access the world in the manner expected of her by men of science like Darwin, and yet *is* intelligent, raises questions about endemic sexism and ableism in the scientific community. Darwin states that 'many higher animals have no such capacity' as do worms, in their ability to 'plug up their burrows' intelligently (*Worms* 93). These higher animals may include educated humans who can both see and hear without as much intelligence as worms or Bridgman. In this regard, Darwin's analogy between Bridgman and the worm offers a critique of the self-styled higher animals, regardless of whether he intended to do so. The gendering of blindness and literacy Tilley outlines evidently plays out in Darwin's invocation of Bridgman, and we can add to this matrix the animalisation of feminised blindness and deafness.

6.2.3 The Worm Turns

Woolf would probably have known about Bridgman, given her fame, and may have read about her in Dickens' work, Darwin's *Worms*, or in *The Descent of Man*. In the latter, one page before Darwin cites Stephen's works on dogs – a passage which Woolf engaged with closely as we have seen – he mentions Bridgman. Darwin writes, 'even an ordinary train of thought almost requires, or is greatly facilitated by some form of language, for the dumb, deaf, and blind girl, Laura Bridgman, was observed to use her fingers,' presumably as though reading raised text, 'whilst dreaming' (110). Woolf would have been aware then, that Darwin aligned blindness and deafness with questions of intelligence, language, and literacy. She

would also have known the famous concluding pages of Dr Johnson's 1775 *Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland* (Woolf bound her copy herself, King and Miletic-Vejzovic np) describing a 'subject of philosophical curiosity': an Edinburgh 'college of the deaf and dumb, who are taught to speak, to *read, to write*, and to practice arithmetick' (emphasis added Johnson 191). Indeed, Woolf's novels feature several characters who are deaf, blind, or both. *Jacob's Room* (1922) includes a blind singer and a woman with nine children, one 'deaf and dumb from birth' (138); in *To the Lighthouse* Mrs Ramsay thinks of her husband as 'born blind, deaf and dumb to ordinary things, but to extraordinary things, with an eye like an eagle's' (59) and Orlando gets 'a whole city of blind women near Bruges to stitch hangings for a silver canopied bed' (101). In each case disability is aligned with intelligence, be it musical, being attuned to extraordinary things, or knowledge of traditional skills. These novels are not my concern here as they do not invoke the worm trope, but they do show Woolf's awareness of blind and deaf people being discursively associated with extraordinary intelligence.

In Woolf's works worms are also associated with literacy and vision. In her essay 'The Leaning Tower' (1940) she says:

> A boy brought up in a library becomes a book worm; brought up alone in the fields he turns into an earth worm. To breed the kind of butterfly a writer is you must let him sun himself for three or four years in Oxford or Cambridge – so it seems (*E*6 266).

Woolf's writings are crawling with yet another worm variation, glow-worms (technically bioluminescent beetles), which invoke illicit reading. In *Orlando: A Biography* we learn that as a child, Orlando 'was sometimes found at midnight by a page still reading. They took his taper away, and he bred glow-worms to serve his purpose' (68). In *The Waves*, Woolf

describes ‘monumental ladies’ with fingers moving like ‘*dim glowworms over the pages of French,* geography and arithmetic’ (69). These characters are both aligned with worms through juxtaposition and symbiotic co-existence (Orlando encourages the glowworms to breed, they enable him to read), and in the latter case, simile. In both cases humans can read because of these creatures. Woolf, then, intimately connects material and figurative worms with vision, intellect, and literacy. It is striking how much these monumental ladies resemble Laura Bridgman: they read French with their fingers, gesturing towards Braille, or tactile reading, which was invented in France. Their fingers are, by association with worms, both blind (as are earthworms) and illuminating (as glow worms), reinforcing the Bridgman connection. It may well be that these monumental ladies are both intellectual, and literally or symbolically blind. Woolf therefore turns the worm trope to advantage by suggesting that vermicular women are monumental. At the same time, she undercuts the very concept of a monument, for as Darwin tells us, great edifices are ‘undermined by worms’ (324), and so the Bridgman-like (r)evolutionary worm turns. The worm trope, then, has feminist, regenerative potential, both for how we think about women, ability, and literacy, and how we think about the (recomposed) trope itself.

In *A Room of One’s Own,* Woolf uses deafness as an affirmative metaphor for women of ‘genius’ such as Emily Bronte and Jane Austen (56).[73] She writes, ‘[t]hey alone were deaf to that persistent voice, now domineering, now patronizing, now grieved, now shocked, now angry, now avuncular, that voice which cannot let women alone’ (56), the voice, she says, of patriarchal society. Woolf’s alignment of deafness and women’s genius may be coincidence, *or* Woolf may be playing with Darwin’s worm-Bridgman-intelligence figuration, making metaphorical deafness a positive requisite for women’s genius. Evidently, her representation of women’s intellect is rich with figurative references to material and metaphorical deafness and blindness, and it is useful to consider that

[73] See Tilley (3-4) and Grant on literature and deafness.

intelligence through these tropes. Furthermore, Woolf may well use the worm that signifies women's intellect to bait her line as she fishes for ideas in *A Room of One's Own*, where she says that '[t]hought […] let its line down into the stream' to catch a 'little fish' (5). Finally, it is worth noting that although feminised, earthworms are parthenogenic (self-fertilising) hermaphrodites, which may have appealed to Woolf's sense of 'the androgynous mind' which is 'resonant and porous' and is 'naturally creative, incandescent and undivided' (*AROO* 73-4). Her worm trope exposes the feminisation of the vermicular and the animalisation (vermicularisation if you will) of blind and deaf women, re-composing these Darwinian discursive synonyms in an affirmation of beastly female genius. This genius is, as we saw in chapter two, always already satirical (in its play on the man of genius trope) and therefore undermined even as it is formed. Woolf and Darwin have much to tell us about problematic worm tropes and representations of deafness, blindness, and women's intellect. Reading their work through these worm tropes enables us to unearth these layers of signification which are potentially useful to literary modernist studies, animal studies, and disability studies.

Section 6.3 Women & Fiction

6.3.1 The Spider and the Worm

When digging for Woolf's worms it is worth turning to *Women & Fiction* (published posthumously in 1992), the manuscript version of *A Room of One's Own*, before returning to the published version. Here we find the earlier iteration of Woolf's winged worm as a spider and web. Even in this form, her figure is Darwinian and concerned with women's literacy, though it no longer has associations with deafness and blindness. Furthermore, the spider, like the silkworms I discuss below, weave their worlds from silk produced by their bodies. Woolf's winged worm does *not* appear in the first pages of chapter three in the Fitzwilliam manuscript in *Women & Fiction*, as it does in *A Room of One's Own.* Instead,

chapter three of the manuscript opens with complex arachnid imagery and slippery figurative language:

> ~~writing~~, is like a spiders web, attached ~~in all sorts of~~ <in ever
>
> so lightly>
>
> ~~odd places to the things~~; to life
>
> […]
>
> when the web is pulled askew, hooked up here,
>
> or with a great hole in it there, <the centre> then one
>
> remembers that these webs are not spun in
>
> mid air by incorporeal creatures, but ~~are the~~
>
> ~~work of~~ ~~do depend on~~ are attached to grossly
>
> material things, <like> money, & health, a ~~room~~ to merely; <&
>
> ~~privacy~~ & a [house?]> in short
>
> the spider is a human being: I was <no doubt> thinking as I
>
> ~~provided myself with~~ <made> this simile of the spiders [sic] web,
>
> of certain strains & holes that to my mind
>
> still slightly disfigure the webs ~~that~~ made by women (*WF* 65).

This web invokes Darwin's 'inextricable web of affinities' between species (*Origin* 319). Indeed, Beer observes that '[w]eb imagery is to be found everywhere in Victorian writing' (1983 156).[74] Woolf's narrator explicitly spins the web of the simile she has '~~provided~~' enacting the web-spinning and simile-making which she describes. That said, although the web is 'like' writing (a simile), 'the spider *is* a human being,' a metaphor (emphasis added *WF* 65). Woolf's similes and metaphors are slippery and self-reflexive, drawing attention to

[74] See the allegory of the spider and the bee in Jonathan Swift's *The Battle of the Books* (1704).

their own 'made' figurative nature (*WF* 65), the Darwinian web pulled askew to reveal the writer and writing that forms Woolf's (and implicitly Darwin's) web of affinities.

Woolf's use of sex here is also slippery. She continues, 'five hundred a year & a clear view of the sky influence spiders, of both sexes, ~~when~~ at their work' (*WF* 66). The slippages here between 'women' (65) and 'both sexes' (66) anticipates Woolf's discussion of the androgynous mind in *A Room of One's Own*. The women who write are figured here as spiders, later as vermicular hermaphrodites, in each case incorporating 'both sexes' (*WF* 66). In *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf's spider passage is reduced to the extended simile that 'fiction is like a spider's web' and 'when the web is pulled askew' one remembers that these webs' are 'the work of suffering human beings' (32) with the narrator's role and androgyny excised. In her shift from spiders to the worm, Woolf also shifts from plural creatures to a singular creature that is sexually plural, a feminised hermaphrodite more fitting to her discussion of women's intellectual and literary capabilities. There is another subtle shift here. In *A Room of One's Own*, the narrator reads the historians and poets and concludes that a 'very queer, composite *being* thus emerges' (emphasis added 33). In *Women & Fiction*, however, this being is specifically animalised as a 'very queer composite *creature*' (emphasis added 68). Instead of using the worm-eagle simile the narrator says, '[w]e must ~~needs~~ / reduce this glaring monster to human size before we / can understand ~~any~~ <anything about her> a word that she writes' (*WF* 68). This monstrous, creaturely woman in the manuscript, then, *is a writer herself*, not merely the impression made by (mostly male) writers and historians as she is depicted in *A Room of One's Own.* In the manuscript, the word human (excised from later versions) emphasises the figurative cleaving to and from of the human and the animal, the writer and the written, the spinner and the spun. This monstrous figure suggests a preoccupation with the unstable boundaries between species – the creative spider or writer – and sexes (she does not distinguish between sex and gender): women, men, the androgynous, hermaphrodites. Woolf thus queers the Darwinian web of

affinities and pays attention to the creativity of human and nonhuman actors. But I digress from my worm theme.

Woolf's winged worm does appear later on in the manuscript as the 'odd monster that one made up by / reading the historians & the poets simultaneously,' a '~~woodlouse~~ <worm winged like an eagle>,' the 'spirit of life & beauty ~~with~~ in a kitchen chopping up / suet' (*WF* 79). Woolf (casting aside the woodlouse in favour of the more regenerative and loaded worm signifier) reiterates the need to find the women behind such monstrous figures:

> But these monsters, however amusing to the
> imagination, have no existence in fact; What one
> must do ~~next, is to reduce bring tha new~~ was to
> ~~humanise her, to bring~~ make an ordinary woman
> of her, which ~~was~~ one does, in real life, by thinking
> prosaically & poetically at one & the same moment (*WF* 79).

The word 'humanise' is crossed through, and the 'ordinary woman' Woolf's makes of this monster is not humanised, but recast, 'prosaically & poetically at one & the same moment,' in avian terms. This nameless bird-woman appears in the manuscript:

> Thus letting the
> two sides – that she is
> dressed in blue, & wears
> patent leather shoes & has a
> cut on her finger ~~mix~~
> mingle with the
> oddities & astonishments

of the soul which

~~her underneath~~ is for

ever modifying the

blue dress . & the

blue dress [then?] (*WF* 78).

This sketch anticipates the character of Mrs Martin (not named in the manuscript), the ordinary woman behind the monstrous winged worm in *A Room of One's Own*.

Woolf describes this ordinary woman in her published polemic:

> What one must do to bring her to life was to think poetically and prosaically at one and the same moment, thus keeping in touch with fact—that she is Mrs Martin, aged thirty-six, dressed in blue, wearing a black hat and brown shoes; but not losing sight of fiction either—that she is a vessel in which all sorts of spirits and forces are coursing and flashing perpetually (*AROO* 34).

Mrs Martin resembles the common house martin. These birds are blue-black, with white bellies, and dark feathers on their heads, much like little black hats. They resemble the more symbolically loaded swallow (an Ovidian figure signifying rape) but are 'common,' ordinary. In flight they move swiftly 'flashing perpetually' (*AROO* 34). They also, as Woolf's many bird guides (see previous chapter) could confirm, eat insects and invertebrates, presumably including worms. Thus, Woolf's Mrs Martin is not 'humanise[d]' (*WF* 79) but transformed from the dehumanising and monstrous chimeric winged eagle of history and literature (as written by men) into an affirmative feathered woman, a common bird who eats worms (and perhaps worm tropes). Woolf's winged worm and her ordinary woman evolve across versions of *A Room of One's Own*, but they are always Darwinian,

chimeric, and regenerative, recomposing misogynistic monstrous animal tropes into affirmative ones.

Section 6.4 'creature, Dictator'

6.4.1 The Heart of England

I have considered worm tropes in Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* through Darwin's *Worms*, and will now turn to the Darwinian and eugenicist Darwinist politics of Woolf's 'worm […] creature, Dictator' in her explicitly anti-fascist feminist polemic *Three Guineas* (135). First, I will discuss Darwin's fascination with Argentinian dictator General Juan Manuel de Rosas, whom he met during his *Beagle* voyage and aligns with vermicular sea-pens (which Darwin calls worms) in his *Journal of Researches*. Then I will consider how Woolf's 'creature, Dictator' was shaped by Darwin's portrayal of Rosas and the sea-pens, before turning to Woolf's Darwinian, pacifist and anti-fascist silkworm and mulberry tree imagery.

In *Three Guineas*, Woolf uses the worm metaphor (and associated caterpillar simile – Woolf embraces this vermicular slippage) to figure dictators as vermicular, gesturing towards Darwinian discourse in response to the rise of fascism and Nazism. Woolf says that British newspapers hold:

> the egg of the very same worm that we know under other names in other countries. There we have in embryo the creature, Dictator as we call him when he is Italian or German […] And he is here among us, raising his ugly head, spitting his poison, small still, curled up like a caterpillar on a leaf, but in the heart of England. […] And what right have we, Sir, to trumpet our ideals of freedom and justice to other countries when we can shake out from our most respectable newspapers any day of the week eggs like these? (*TG* 135).

If the worm is a trope figuring foreign dictators, then the worm egg in British newspapers figures latent discursive English fascism or Nazism. (I will discuss the caterpillar variation shortly). If we recall that the eagle was a Nazi symbol, then we are faced with a new kind of worm winged like an eagle: not the monstrosity of women imagined by historians and poets (in a text which also considers Mussolini's views on the 'inferiority of women' *AROO* 28), but of a nation developing a taste for dictatorship.

Woolf's work, like Darwin's, as we shall see, raises questions about the separation of the individual dictator from the society that produces him. Her 1938 polemic was written in the context of growing fascist discourse in Europe, which used animal metaphors to denigrate marginalized groups (Sax 18), as we saw in my discussion of the East End slums in chapter four. Such discourse – including vermin, leech and grub, parasite, and tapeworm metaphors (Rash 179-89) – featured in Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf* (1925), and in Nazi legislation and speeches from 1933 onwards (Musolff 57-8, 60). We know that Woolf heard Hitler 'baying' on the radio: 'Hitler boasted & boomed but shot no solid bolt. Mere violent rant, & then broke off. We listened in to the end.' (*D*5 169, 178). She also collected and quoted from newspaper clippings about these speeches in her *Three Guineas* research scrapbooks (*TG* 245, 247-248, 252, 286). These clippings also recorded Hitler's distinction between 'a nation of pacifists and a nation of men,' and his view that 'women are most useful to the nation' as mothers (*TG* 252, 286) or 'breeding machines' (*MHP* microfilm reel 4, MH/B16.f). It is therefore possible that Woolf drew directly on both Darwin's *Journal* and Nazi rhetoric in her description of the dictator as a worm (or caterpillar) in her pacifist feminist polemic. Even if she did not, it is useful to read Darwin's worms alongside Woolf's to better understand the ways that worm tropes are used in Darwinian and Woolfian discourse (and animal studies more widely) to situate dictators in relation to the societies that produce them.

Woolf observes that we are 'all agreed that the dictator when we meet him abroad is a very dangerous as well as a very ugly animal,' but points out that 'he is here among us,' too, 'raising his ugly head, spitting his poison, small, still, curled up like a caterpillar on a leaf,' and 'from this egg' the 'practical obliteration of [our] freedom by Fascists or Nazis will spring' (*TG* 175–76). This poison includes claims made in newspapers that Woolf quotes, such as 'woman has too much liberty,' and '[h]omes are the real places' of women (*TG* 173, 174). She points out that 'one is written in English, the other in German. But where is the difference? Are they not saying the same thing? Are they not both the voices of Dictators?' (*TG* 175). The egg of the worm of the fascist and Nazi dictator, and the latent English dictator, for Woolf, is patriarchal misogyny evident in cultural discourse. With such discourse prevalent in British society, Woolf raises questions about the conditions and societies in which dictators emerge. The writers of such misogynist articles are, she says, the 'enemies with which the daughters of educated men have to fight,' and it is 'the woman who has to breathe that poison and to fight that insect' (*TG* 176). Indeed, in Nazi Germany, we shall see that women with 'too much liberty' were encouraged to stay at home to breed silkworms for the Third Reich. But silkworms (and women) also hold figurative potential to turn, and to level fascist and Nazi discourse. By connecting dictatorship with patriarchal discourse, we can see that this fascist or Nazi winged worm is not so different from historico-poetic worm winged like an eagle in *A Room of One's Own.* The logic of misogyny that created the first monster – woman as a winged worm in 1929 – also created the second: the misogynist-cum-dictator winged worm in 1938. The worm trope in Woolf's polemics undergoes a transformation from patriarchal trope in *A Room of One's Own* to dictatorial trope in *Three Guineas*, both invoking misogynist discourse. We shall see that Woolf turns this worm to pacifist, feminist advantage. First though, let us consider the Darwinian provenance of this dictator worm.

6.4.2 Sea Worms

While Woolf was probably familiar with Darwin's 'kindly feelings' for earthworms, it is his alignment of worm-like sea-pens with dictators that interests me here. Darwin came across a mass of vermicular creatures, probably sea-pens called *Virgularia Patagonica*, during his *Beagle* voyage. In his account of this encounter in his *Journal*, Darwin includes a description of the sea-pens by the early seventeenth-century voyager Captain Lancaster:

> a small twig growing up like a young tree […] a great worm is found to be its root, and as the tree groweth in greatness, so doth the worm diminish, and as soon as the worm is entirely turned into a tree it rooteth in the earth, and so becomes great. This transformation is one of the strangest wonders that I saw in all my travels: for if this tree is plucked up, while young, and the leaves and bark stripped off, it becomes a hard stone when dry, much like white coral: thus is this worm twice transformed into different natures (*Journal* 97).

This worm appears in the middle of Darwin's description of General Rosas, whom he met in 1833 at his camp on the Rio Colorado during the *Beagle* voyage (Desmond and Moore 1991 140). I want to suggest that Darwin aligns Rosas with the worm in order to pose questions about the relationship between the individual and society, and that this alignment is useful, given Woolf's familiarity with his *Journal*, for tunnelling behind the vermicular and Darwinian politics of her dictator worm in *Three Guineas.*

Darwin's relationship with Rosas has been discussed in several Darwin biographies (Browne, Desmond and Moore, Novoa and Levine, and Parodiz). Rosas (1793-1877) was a cattle rancher and Governor of Buenos Aires from 1829–1832 who became the general of an army 'entirely independent of the state […] commissioned to exterminate' indigenous peoples (Browne 218). Rosas was 'an unambiguous dictator' from 1835–52 (Browne 256),

when he was overthrown and fled to England, where he lived until his death (Parodiz 110). Darwin, who wrote extensively of Rosas's genocidal purpose in his *Journal of Researches*, claimed that Rosas was 'a man of an extraordinary character, and has a most predominant influence in the country, which it seems probable he will use to its prosperity and advancement' (*Journal* 71). In the 1845 second edition of the *Journal of Researches*, Darwin provided a footnote to these claims, stating that this 'prophecy has turned out entirely and miserably wrong' (*Journal* 71). At the time, however, 'it was clear' to Darwin 'that Rosas ultimately would become the dictator' (*Journal* 135). Darwin 'obtained what [he] wanted, a passport and order for the government post horses' and was 'pleased with [his] interview with the terrible General' ('Beagle Diary' August 15 1833). Darwin depended on Rosas's resources: an 'escort' (*Journal* 106) of his soldiers to Buenos Aires, accommodation in 'the great *estancias* of General Rosas' (113), and 'war-surplus horses for Darwin's exploration of the interior' (Novoa and Levine 19). The 'chain of *postas* strung out across the country' manned by Rosas's soldiers also 'promised some basic security' for Darwin, enabling him to 'penetrate further inland than any European who had previously travelled in the area' (Browne 254).

It is worth noting that Darwin's biographers do not discuss the fact that no letters exchanged between Darwin and Rosas have survived, yet Darwin repeatedly stated in his *Journal of Researches* and diaries that the two men were in correspondence. For example, in August 1833 Darwin 'had a letter of recommendation from the government of Buenos Ayres […] taken to General Rosas, who sent me a very obliging message' (*Journal* 70), and he later writes 'letter from General Rosas' ('Notebook B' 10 September 1833). The two men also met years later in England, probably in 1870, and surely required correspondence to do so (Parodiz 111). The Darwin Correspondence Project has digitised over 9,000 of Darwin's letters yet the website states '0 letters exchanged' with Rosas and the Cambridge archivists I have spoken to confirm this statement. There are also no Darwin-related letters in the

University of Notre Dame Rosas archive. Darwin may not have kept these letters (as the Cambridge archivists suspect) or maybe the men exchanged indirect messages. It is also possible, given the atrocities Rosas committed, that Darwin or his relatives chose not to share these letters with the public or even destroyed them.

In any case, Darwin's dependence on Rosas and his troops is important for how we read this passage on sea-pens. The passage is immediately followed by Darwin's discussion of the 'rumours of wars and victories, between the troops of Rosas and the wild Indians' (*Journal* 97). Darwin's discussion of the sea-pens falls between his description of Rosas, and that of Rosas's troops, separating the two, but aligning both with this worm. These passages are also aligned by their shared classical allusions. The Ovidian transformation of the worms that Lancaster describes is complimented by a quote from Virgil's *Aeneid* on the following page, describing the drunken Cyclops vomiting bloody wine, whom Darwin compares to Rosas's army of 'savage' soldiers 'sick with drunkenness,' drinking 'the steaming blood of cattle' (*Journal* 97). The worms are a small 'wonder' to the voyaging Lancaster, just as Cyclops is an 'immensus' (*Journal* 97) and horrible wonder to the voyaging Odysseus, and later Aeneas. The first published version of Darwin's *Journal of Researches* mentions these sea-pens, but does not include the Lancaster passage cited above or use the word worm (*Journal* 97). Darwin must have added this metaphor at a later stage, opening up the slippery figurative potential of these sea-pens by gesturing towards the lowly (earth)worm, and towards Ovid's *Metamorphosis*. He may also have been alluding to vermicular illustrations of Rosas in the Argentine press. In 1839, in an illustration in *El Grito Argentino* (reproduced in 1841 in *¡Muera Rosas!*), Rosas was depicted drinking blood from the heads of his enemies, scattered around him, with winged vermicular creatures flying overhead (Jarak 38). In 1842 Antonio Somellera drew Rosas, for *¡Muera Rosas!*, surrounded by skulls (presumably the heads of his enemies again), with a fistful of worms or serpents over his head (93). Darwin may have seen these images. If not, the haematophagia and

worms in the illustrations and his *Journal* are a striking coincidence, and attest to the alignment of dictators and worms in nineteenth century discourse. The alignment of Rosas and the troops with these sea-worms, the classical references, and the images linking the two passages, all imply both that these men are 'low in the scale of organization' like earthworms, but also that the scale is a lateral, multispecies 'tangled bank' of wonder, and perhaps of horror, destabilizing (we have seen that worms have the symbolic potential to undermine) any hierarchy which Rosas is attempting to establish through his genocidal war. In this sense Darwin's worm is (r)evolutionary.

Sea-pens defy taxonomization and cannot be classed as singular or multiple. Darwin says they are 'many thousands; yet we see that they act by one movement […] Well may one be allowed to ask, what is an individual?' (*Journal* 96). The 'figure of the worm is thus instrumental to the overturning of the notion of a singular, unified self as it is bound up in language' (Murray 154). The 'Cæsar-like Rosas' (Darwin 'Letter to Edward Lumb' 30 March 1834), and the 'villainous, banditti-like army' (*Journal* 69) that carry out his genocidal purpose can no more be separated from one another than can these sea-pens. Likewise, Darwin cannot be completely separated, as an individual, from the general and troops on whose resources he depended. Darwin not only implies that Rosas and the troops belong at the bottom of the evolutionary scale, he also unintentionally places himself there by association. Furthermore, the fact that as the 'tree groweth' the worm 'diminsh[es]' suggests a corruption of the body politic by the vermicular. Whereas earthworm tropes are regenerative, feminised, and connected to women's intellect, the vermicular sea-pen analogy blurs the boundaries between the individual (male) and the collective, and invokes mortality, through association with the genocidal dictator.

In *Three Guineas* Woolf aligns 'the creature, Dictator' with a 'worm' (135), as Darwin does. Like Darwin's sea-pen that becomes a 'tree,' Woolf's dictator worm is arboreal. She says that this worm is 'like a caterpillar on a leaf' (*TG* 135) and that these

'caterpillars [circle] head to tail, round and round the mulberry tree' (156), the tree on which silk-caterpillars thrive. This may seem a positive, creative image, as silkworms produce silk, but this product is obtained at the cost of the silkworm's life. Where Darwin's dictator is a sea-pen, Woolf's dictator worm, it seems, is a silk-caterpillar, commonly called a silkworm. It is possible, then, that Darwin influenced Woolf's writing on worms and dictators in several senses: like Darwin, Woolf aligns worms with dictators, and suggests that dictators are inseparable from the societies that produce them. She places the dictator low down on the evolutionary scale as an invertebrate, and at the bottom of the production line as a silk-caterpillar, re-appropriating the Nazi rhetoric of the 1930s, which cast marginalized peoples as worms, in her anti-fascist, pacifist, feminist manifesto. Her worm tropes, as we shall see, appear to turn from fascist marginalizing pejorative to a signifier that levels dictators and destabilizes hierarchies. Although worms are 'low in the scale of organization,' they disrupt the very notion of organized hierarchies, and play a significant role in discourse used by, about, and against dictators (*Worms* 3). But her silkworm trope does more than this.

Section 6.5 Silkworms and Mulberry Trees

6.5.1 A History of Sericulture

Woolf's vermicular dictator may be connected to Darwin's interest in silkworms. From the 1840s to the 1860s he was in correspondence with several silkworm specialists.[75] In *The Descent of Man*, which I have shown Woolf engaged with closely, Darwin used silk-moths 'for judging the proportional numbers of the sexes' (288), and in *The Variation of Animals and Plants under Domestication* (1868) he discussed attempts to cross-breed silk-moths to 'yield permanent races' (76). Darwin's work on silk-moths, then, intimately connects sex,

[75] Darwin 'Letter to Alexander Wallace' 25 Feb 1868, 'Letter to Giovani Canestrini' 13 March 1868, 'Letter to 'Mary Anne Theresa Whitby' 2 September [1847], 'Letter to Hugh Falconer' [December 1844], 'Letter to Isidoro Dell'Oro' 2 May 1873, 'Letter to Armand de Quatrefages' 3 July [1862], 'Letter to H. T. Stainton' 2 March 1868, 'Letter to Karl von Scherzer' 20 October 1868, 'Letter to Alexander Wallace' 28 February 1868, 'Letter to J.D. Hooker' 13 October 1848, 'Letter to Fritz Müller' 17 June 1868. F. Bashford and Edward Blyth 'Letter to Charles Darwin' [after 3 July 1855]. All np.

breeding, and sericulture. His research also engages with the sericulture boom of the early nineteenth century. In 1826, for example, Joseph von Hazzi published a manual that aimed to introduce sericulture to Germany 'as a cottage industry' which would 'add to domestic income by engaging women and children in productive labour' and 'strengthen the moral fibre of the nation by inculcating ideals of order, industry, and cleanliness' (McCulloh 81). Sericulture discourse, like most schemes for improving the textiles industry in the nineteenth century, was concerned with women, domestic labour, and nationalism.

Sericulture began in China nearly five thousand years ago and spread to Europe in the thirteenth century. Attempts at creating a sericulture industry were also made in early modern England. In November 1609, James I wrote a public letter, reproduced in several sericulture manuals, offering to subsidise 'the widespread planting of mulberry trees in England' for silkworms (Olbricht 231), and a mulberry orchard was planted where Buckingham Palace now stands (McCulloh 80). Shakespeare planted a mulberry tree in his garden at New Place and the wood from this tree was later used to make paperweights and walking sticks for tourists (Ackroyd 304-305). Attempts at creating a sericulture industry in early modern England were unsuccessful because the wrong kind of mulberry tree (black rather than white) was imported. Woolf may well have been aware of this history. In *The Times*, which she read frequently, there were several 1938 articles regarding mulberry trees: in February Sotheby & co. advertised 'A cup made from Shakespeare's Mulberry tree' ('Sotheby & Co.' 27), and in July, *The Times* reported that London's 'fine old mulberry trees testify to the liberal hand of James I, who distributed them […] for the benefit of the silkworms' ('Colour In The Town Garden' 21). Darwin himself had a mulberry tree in his garden at Down House in Kent (Bowen 13) and there was 'a massive 300-year-old mulberry tree in the garden' (*E*6 166 n30) opposite Woolf's seventeenth century country retreat, Monk's House. Shakespeare's, Darwin's, and Woolf's trees may all be the result of James I's interest in silkworms. In sericulture practice, cocooned silkworms are killed (usually

boiled or steamed) before they can transform into silk-moths, in order to prevent the metres of chrysalis silk from breaking (Olbricht 230). Silkworms are, as Woolf scholar Rachel Sarsfield puts it, 'by definition, caterpillars destined never to become moths' (2003 107). If the earthworm points towards feminised agency, undermined monuments, regeneration, and invisible histories, and sea-pens invoke dictators and complicity in dictatorships, then silkworms may gesture towards agency interrupted, development prevented, and labour co-opted.

Silkworms also have great potential to signify creativity, ontogenetic evolution (the development of the individual), dissolution, recomposition, and regeneration. The silkworm composts itself. Woolf would have learned from her childhood entomology exploits and the insect film screenings that, as Murray explains:

> in order to reform itself anew, the caterpillar must first dissolve itself entirely. The process of liquidation that takes place within the cocoon involves the grouping together of 'imaginal cells,' which cluster and vibrate together to create the organs of the adult insect (96).

This is called the *imago* stage, a term which also means the imaginal, 'relating to the imagination . . . a mental image' (Murray 96-7). This double meaning, as Murray points out (in reference to H.D.'s poetry) is useful for thinking through 'pupal imagery' in modernist writing, where the cocoon 'functions as a space of imaginative possibility,' of 'aesthetic potential, and where trauma is reconceived as a source of creativity' (Murray 96-7). This includes the transformation of war trauma for H.D. in her novel *Asphodel* (c.1922, published posthumously): 'Men could do nothing for her for a butterfly […] a soft and luminous moth

larva was keeping her safe. She was stronger than men, men, men – she was stronger than guns, guns, guns' (H.D. 1992 160, 162).

Indeed, in 'Tribute to Freud' (1956), H.D recalls seeing boys 'putting salt on the caterpillar and it writhes, huge like an object seen under a microscope' and asks:

> how can I talk about the crucified Worm? I have been leafing over pages in the café, there are fresh atrocity stories. I cannot talk about the thing that actually concerns me, I cannot talk to Sigmund Freud in Vienna, 1933, about Jewish atrocities in Berlin (H.D. 2012 134–5).

Her writing, like Woolf's, juxtaposes the larval caterpillar and worm with war and the Third Reich respectively. It would be difficult to thread H.D. (because these works were published after Woolf's death) into the tapestry of intertexts for Woolf's worms. Nonetheless, her vermicular modernism, and Murray's reading of it, is useful for understanding how Woolf's pupal writing, too, 'eschews conclusive outcomes in favour of ongoing possibilities' where the cocoon serves as both a medium for 'imaginative thinking' and 'as an outer limit or container for thought' (Murray 116). The cocoon, then, can 'both to protect and recreate the self' (Murray 110), navigating interrupted agency, development and labour, dissolving and re-composing itself through the complex *imago* of the worm trope as signifier, into an affirmative self that resists the call of dictators.

The interconnected issues of sex, breeding, and nation in British sericulture manuals recurred in the discourse of the German sericulture revival – Prussia under Frederick the Great had seen unsustainable 'compulsory mulberry cultivation' (McCulloh 80) – in the 1930s. The Reich Food Estate 'planted mulberry trees wherever possible, even on the grounds of factories and airports' in a bid to 'redevelop the nation's silk industry' (Guenther 236). Silk was used to make ties, hosiery, umbrellas and World War Two parachutes

(Guenther 236). The Reich Association for Silkworm Breeders argued 'not only the merits of breeding silkworms, but, in keeping with fascist ideals of racial purity, mandate[d] the extermination of inferior individuals' (McCulloh 81). Silkworms were to employ women, keep them in the domestic sphere, and teach them eugenicist ideals and practises, aping natural selection through artificial selection – silk-moth breeding and eugenics – according to Nazi ideals. Sericulture discourse was evidently linked to nationalism, and to women's role in a fascist, patriarchal society. Woolf's trope of the silkworm, then, has potential to turn to both feminist and anti-fascist advantage. The anti-fascist potential of Woolf's mulberry tree has yet to be fully explored, although the refrain 'here we go round the mulberry tree' – from a nursery song originating in a women's prison in which children dance in a circle holding hands (Jack 52-6) – appears four times in *Three Guineas* (181, 190, 199, 205). Woolf scholars consistently associate this refrain with the poetry of T. S. Eliot – 'Here we go round the prickly pear / Prickly pear prickly pear / Here we go round the prickly pear / At five o'clock in the morning' from 'The Hollow Men' (Eliot 81) – and William Blake (Blake 49, 507, 654, 764) rather than sericulture itself (*TG* EN 281). I cannot do justice to the Eliot quote here, but I will touch on Blake briefly.

Woolf's mulberry tree nursey game 'aptly symbolises the impenetrable circle of patriarchy' that confines women to 'the *nursery*, as mothers' (original emphasis Sarsfield 2003 106).[76] Woolf's mulberry tree *also* gestures towards the Third Reich preoccupation with confining women to the home as silkworm keepers, and the early modern British history of attempting exactly the same thing. We can see this in sericulture manuals from early modern England which proposed similar values regarding women to those published under the Third Reich. Samuel Hartlib's *Legacy of Husbandry* (1651), for example, states that 'we have plenty of women, children, old folks, lame, decrepite &c. who are fit to be overseers of

[76] I will not discuss sericulture in Woolf's *Night and Day* (1919) because the novel precedes Nazi interest in silkworms and because Sarsfield has already extensively demonstrated that these silkworms are symbols of female oppression and creativity (2003 101, 2004 259, 2006 111).

this worke' (qtd in Olbricht 233). This manual, like those produced in 1930s Germany, encouraged women to remain at home cultivating silkworms. Woolf's use of the nursery rhyme, I suggest, alludes to this connection between British and German attitudes towards women and sericulture, as evidenced by these production manuals. The rhetoric from both periods, and in both countries, indicated a respective anticipation of, and alignment with, eugenicist ideologies. Both required women to labour in the domestic sphere, and to practise the artificial selection and extermination of silkworms.

6.5.2 Loose Threads: Blake and Bowen

It is worth worming our way through some Darwinian readings of Blake's poetry, an intertext for Woolf's silkworms and mulberry trees, as they enable us to draw new connections between Woolf's worms, the oppression of women, and eugenics. Woolf says that it 'seems as if there were no progress in the human race, but only repetition,' that is, humans are not evolving, because they are 'singing the same old song, "Here we go round the mulberry tree'" (*TG* 147). The old song does not change and the caterpillars dancing around Woolf's mulberry tree never become moths. Indeed, as Aristotle says that the word *psyche* (moth or butterfly) also means soul, mind, or spirit (1910 551a13), the singers are denied subjectivity itself. Woolf conflates ontogeny (the development of the individual) and phylogeny (the development of a species), suggesting that if the individuals that make up the species do not develop, nor will the species. Woolf's 'caterpillar on a leaf' (*TG* 135) also alludes to Blake's 'Auguries of Innocence' where 'The Catterpillar on the Leaf / Repeats to thee thy Mothers grief' (Blake 507). The word 'repeats' indicates a cycle, as Sarsfield puts it, 'condemning women' to 'repeating' the 'oppression suffered by generations of mothers' (2003 106). Woolf's Blake reference reinforces the sense that this cycle is toxic, adding an intertextual layer of signification to the silkworm trope. If Woolf's silkworms are synonyms for women's oppression (in both Britain and Nazi Germany), as Sarsfield suggests, then they

remain infantilised, destined never to become independent. If these silkworms are synonyms for dictators and the societies that produce them (Woolf keeps both options in play), then those dictators will keep circling the mulberry tree. The silkworm and mulberry tropes, then, gesture towards an authoritarian patriarchal society incapable of (metaphorically) evolving, perpetually producing silk-caterpillars that cannot become moths, very like Western ideas of 'static' Chinese civilization from which sericulture originated.

There is a further intertext for Woolf's mulberry trees, overlooked by extant scholarship, in the work of her friend Elizabeth Bowen, whose autobiographical piece 'The Mulberry Tree' (1934) engages, like *Three Guineas*, with themes of women, war and Darwin. In the 'The Mulberry Tree' Bowen recollects her time at Down House, Darwin's former home, when it was a girl's boarding school during World War One, before it became a tourist attraction. Bowen describes 'an old mulberry tree with an iron belt' (13) and says that 'mulberry trees took on an emotional significance' for her (13). She 'cannot imagine a girls' school without a war […] We grew up under the intolerable obligation of being fought for, and could not fall short in character without recollecting that men were dying for us' (16). Her tree gestures towards the psychological effect of World War One on these young women. This mulberry is also explicitly connected to Darwin. The narrative closes with these lines:

> Some years after I left […] the school moved and the building has been reinstated as some kind of shrine, for Charles Darwin lived there for some years and died there, I believe, too. […] Our modern additions have been pulled down […] When I revisited the place, only the indestructible cement flooring of these remained. To indulge sentiment became almost impossible. I have never liked scientific people very much, and it mortifies me to think of them trampling

> reverently around there on visiting days, thinking of Charles Darwin and ignorant of my own youth (21).

This passage indicates that the celebration of eminent men such as Darwin comes at the cost of erasing women's history and their experience of war. Tourists at Down House continue to dance around the tree, unaware of the gendered, and fascist provenance of mulberry trees.

Three Guineas was published at a time when mulberry trees still had symbolic significance in Britain. In June 1938, the month *Three Guineas* was published, Queen Elizabeth (wife of King George VI) attended a garden party at the Mothercraft Training Society in Highgate, where a 'mulberry tree which her Majesty planted seven years ago was dressed by nurses and students as a 'fairy tree' laden with gifts. From this the Queen accepted for the Princesses two dolls dressed as mothercraft babies by the nurses' ('The Mothercraft Training Society' 86). The aims of the Mothercraft Training Society, which was run by specially trained nurses, included: 'to inculcate a lofty view of the responsibilities of maternity, and the duty of every mother to fit herself for the perfect fulfilment [sic] of the natural calls of motherhood' ('The Mothercraft Training Society' 86). The tree here appears to be an emblem of women's societal 'duty' as mothers. *Three* Guineas, which uses mulberry tree imagery to critique discourse that places women in the home as mothers and breeders (of silkworms or infants) was timely.

Section 6.6 'A Different Song'

6.6.1 The Cause of Peace

Three Guineas both condemns fascism and patriarchal society, and calls for change, outlining possible alternatives to dancing around the mulberry tree, and turning the worm trope to feminist, pacifist advantage. In her polemic, Woolf writes of how women are to enter the professions without internalising and perpetuating patriarchal values that encourage

warfare and fascism. She says that if women 'enter the professions without making any conditions as to the way in which the professions are to be practised' then they will end up with 'the old tune […] 'Here we go round the mulberry tree, the mulberry tree, the mulberry tree. Give it all to me, give it all to me, all to me. Three hundred millions spent on war' (*TG* 140). This tune is the mulberry cycle of patriarchy, warfare and fascism, a cycle which Woolf aims to break. Woolf calls for 'a different song and a different conclusion,' a guinea 'spent in the cause of peace' (*TG* 140). She outlines alternatives in both *Three Guineas* and the shorter, serialised version, published in 1938 in *The Atlantic Monthly* in two instalments. In the second instalment, titled 'Women Must Weep – or Unite Against War,' Woolf calls for women to 'do all in your power to break the ring, the vicious circle, the dance round and round the mulberry tree' (*E*6 151). She argues that the only way to 'enter the professions and yet remain […] human beings who discourage war' is to maintain four principles: poverty (earn no more than you need), chastity ('refuse to sell your brain'), derision (of fame), and 'freedom from unreal loyalties' including 'pride of nationality' (*TG* 160, 161). Breaking this vicious cycle would enable writers to write 'what they enjoy writing' and 'refuse to write on any other terms'; readers, in turn, would find this writing 'nourishing' and refuse to read anything 'written for money' (*E*6 151). Women writers would cease to be caterpillars destined never to become moths.

The women characters in Woolf's fiction do accomplish the transition from caterpillar to moth (and sometimes butterfly), gaining agency, breaking the mulberry cycle, and turning the worm trope to feminist pacifist advantage by giving it wings. But these winged worms are not monstrous, like the trope in *A Room of One's Own*, they are characters liberated through the arts of painting, fashion, and words. Woolf stories this metamorphosis, to borrow van Dooren's term again, throughout her works using lepidoptera imagery. Lily Everit in Woolf's short story 'The Introduction' (published posthumously), comes 'out of her chrysalis and [is] proclaimed what in the long darkness of childhood she had never been

[…] this butterfly with a thousand facets to its eyes, and delicate fine plumage, and difficulties and sensibilities and sadnesses innumerable; a woman' (*CSF* 185). This emergence is significant in light of the silkworm politics outlined above and operates as a more triumphant moment in the story than it might otherwise appear. In *The Waves* (1931) Susan sits amongst her friends, 'quenching the silver-grey flickering moth-wing quiver of words with the green spurt of [her] clear eyes' (122). The working title for *The Waves* was *The Moths* (Rohman 2011 12) after a story by Woolf's sister Vanessa Bell: Woolf wrote in a letter to Bell (May 1927), 'your story of the Moth so fascinates me that I am going to write a story about it' (*L*3 372). But as Woolf wrote in her diary (16 September 1929) 'that wont be the name. Moths, I suddenly remember, dont fly by day. And there cant be a lighted candle. Altogether, the shape of the book wants considering--& with time I could do it' (*D*3 254). These women fly by day then. Furthermore, in *To the Lighthouse* (1927) the artist Lily Briscoe's painting has 'the light of a butterfly's wing' (42).

In all three cases, these female characters have undergone the tropological metamorphosis to maturation forbidden by silkworm cultivation. Indeed, Woolf herself passed through an *imago* stage – which she describes in her memoirs using pupal figuration – and emerged as a writer. She recalls that after her mother died 'the blow of death, struck on me; tremulous, filmy eyed as I was, with my wings still creased, sitting there on the edge of my broken chrysalis,' '[b]ut being alive today, and having a waste hour on my hands – for I am writing fiction' she 'will go on with this loose story,' the story of her life (*MB* 137). Woolf, too, broke the mulberry cycle through the act of writing and emerged from her chrysalis. Woolf and her female characters turn the winged worm trope to feminist advantage. These are not the worms winged like eagles created by male historians and poets; they are lepidoptera winged like lepidoptera, tropes of metamorphosis and maturation rather than monstrosity.

Woolf occasionally casts moths as male as, for example, in 'The Death of the Moth' (published posthumously). In this narrative essay, the narrator observes a moth fluttering against the windowpane and feels that to have 'only a moth's part in life, and a day moth's at that, appeared a hard fate, and his zest in enjoying his meagre opportunities to the full, pathetic' (*E*6 442–43). We have seen that Woolf's lepidoptera imagery is often associated with the oppression of women. Perhaps it is such oppression that the dying moth evokes when Woolf writes that, 'the thought of all that life might have been had he been born in any other shape caused one to view his simple activities with a kind of pity' (*E*6 443). By sexing the moth male, Woolf both makes it easier for readers who might not be sympathetic to feminism to recognize the injustice of life being circumscribed by 'shape' (implicitly sex) and suggests that men are also limited in their opportunities in a patriarchal society. As Benjamin Bagocius points out, Woolf raises questions about masculinity and the fixity of 'maleness' (and implicitly 'femaleness') through her entomological imagery (723). The narrator admires the fact that '[w]hat he could do he did' (*E*6 443). As this 'tiny bead of pure life' dies, the narrator 'stretched out a pencil, meaning to help him' (*E*6 443), and, after hesitating, 'lifted the pencil again, useless though I knew it to be' (*E*6 444). This pencil does not save the moth, but is not useless, and gestures towards the life she gives him by writing the essay. Likewise, her pen does not save those caterpillar-like women destined never to become moths, but stories possible alternatives that empower women through multivalent, reinscribed worm tropes.

Finally, during the pageant in *Between the Acts* (1941), 'Eleanor and Mildred rise obediently and sing a duet: "I'd be a Butterfly"' (153), a popular 1826 love song by Thomas Haynes Bayly. Several pages later, the full pageant cast 'each declaimed some phrase or fragment from their parts,' and we get this juxtaposition of phrases: '[w]here the worm weaves its winding sheet … I'd be a butterfly. I'd be a butterfly … In thy will is our peace' (166). The first and last phrases do not appear anywhere else in the narrative and seem to

have been written to frame the song title. The winding sheet gestures towards the silk produced by silkworms, for which they are killed, bringing the reader back to the chrysalis, the *imago* stage. The repetition of the line 'I'd be a butterfly' introduces a new refrain, a different song that emerges from the imaginal process, that gestures towards life, maturation, and the rupture of the mulberry tree cycle, which might lead to 'our peace.' The worm trope is winged again to pacifist advantage. The line 'thy will' might refer to the (imagined legal) will of the silkworm that bequeaths this peace and the phrase also addresses the audience (both in the novel and the reader) whose will (intent) might bring about peace. Furthermore, Woolf's free indirect discourse, which does not attribute these lines to a character (though presumably Eleanor and Mildred sing Bayly's lyrics) has a vermicular levelling effect. Who is calling for whom to bring about peace? Woolf leaves this question open. In any case, the juxtaposition of the metamorphosed worm trope with peace solidifies the association between the two terms: worms then, may gesture towards war, and *these* iterations of the winged worm towards peace. Woolf thickens the silkworm's layers of signification, storying a pacifist politics, 'a different song and a different conclusion,' a guinea 'spent in the cause of peace' (*TG* 140). As such her formal aesthetic, and political refiguring, or recomposition, of the worm trope is 'useful to feminism' (Goldman 1998 96), pacifism, and anti-fascism.

I have shown how we can gain insight into the complex politics of Woolf's (r)evolutionary worm tropes and dictator imagery by reading them through Darwin's work on earthworms, sea-pens, and silk-caterpillars, in the context of sericulture discourse. Both writers demonstrate, through their worm tropes, the discursive interconnectedness of women's intellect and metaphors of seeing, hearing and literacy; dictators, naturalists, and the societies that produce them; and the relationship between sericulture, women's eugenicist practices, and patriarchal, fascist discourse. I have argued that Woolf subverts Darwin's worms, and the monstrous vermicular representations of women in literature and history, through her recomposition of the winged worm from monstrous to feminist figure.

I have suggested too, that Woolf echoes Darwin's alignment of worms and dictators, refiguring the worm as a silk caterpillar. She recomposes that woman-as-silkworm (breeder) trope from a signifier that points towards arrested development and co-opted eugenicist labour, where women are figured as caterpillars destined never to become moths, to an *imago* of women emerging from their chrysalises, singing a different song in the cause of peace. Analysing these worms in their political and historical context enables us to draw new lines of connection across Darwin's works, and between Woolf's polemics, revealing affinities between her (r)evolutionary winged and dictator worms. The worms that wriggle through Woolf and Darwin's writing raise further questions: what are we to make of the bird in *The Waves* 'that spiked the soft, monstrous body of a defenceless worm' (57)? How might Cassandra's sericulture in *Night and Day* anticipate Woolf's later silkworm imagery? What is the 'force' in *Between the Acts* 'controlling the thrush and the worm' (23)? My research enables us to think through these questions, as well as the 'inextricable web of affinities' (*Origin* 319) between different modernist iterations of the worm and silkmoth caterpillar tropes, such as Marianne Moore's (Apollonian) 'to be a dragon /a symbol of the power of Heaven – of silkworm / size or immense; at times invisible' (177), the tropological transformations of the worm across Djuna Barnes's twenty years of re-spinning her silkworm poem 'Rite of Spring' (Kalaidjian 65), H.D.'s 'cocoon state[s]' (H.D. 1992 179) and Beckett's 'ton of worms' (Beckett 160) analysed by Murray, and how these are entangled with Woolf's winged and caterpillar worms.

Afterword

'Little Animal That I Am'

This thesis has offered the first full-length study of Woolf's preoccupation, across her writing, with Darwin's writing and ideas. I have demonstrated, first, that Woolf's (r)evolutionary engagement with Darwin's works was more sustained, extensive, and subversive than previously recognised, particularly when it comes to the *Descent of Man* (1871). Second, drawing on recent literary animal studies scholarship and building on the work of Gillian Beer and others, I have offered original readings of Darwin's animal tropes and Woolf's Darwinian animal tropes. These multivalent, overloaded signifiers, we have seen, often gesture towards marginalised women, people of colour, the working classes, and animality, and explore the politics of figuration. What is at stake when analysing these unstable animal tropes is who and what gets to count as an actor in a post-Darwin world, a world which for Darwin, was described by language, and for Woolf, was constituted by discourse, by figuration. I have shown that while Woolf embraced the radical aspects of Darwinism – including human animality and the levelling of species hierarchies – she challenged (though not always successfully) others, such as the proto-eugenicist (with all its racialised and classed implications), misogynist and imperialist aspects of Darwin's work. She did so in (r)evolutionary ways through her anti-eugenicist dogs, (anti)imperialist, feminist feathers, and anti-fascist, feminist, pacifist worms, while destabilising notions of pedigree with her horses and leopards: all beastly Darwinian tropes. Woolf therefore reconstitutes the world for animals (including human animals) by disrupting the form, aesthetics, and politics of these animal tropes with new levels of multivalent signification.

In addition to providing new insights into Woolf's works using animal studies approaches, this thesis contributes to scholarship beyond Woolf studies. I have offered new ways of reading animals in literature more broadly, unpacking the messy intersectional politics of animal tropes in ways I hope to be useful to modernist and animal studies. We have seen that scholars such as Peter Adkins, Claire Davison, Caroline Hovanec, Rachel Murray, Cathryn Setz, Derek Ryan, Carrie Rohman, and more have begun analysing the role of animals and the Anthropocene in the work of modernists including James Joyce, Samuel Beckett, H.D., Wyndham Lewis, H.G. Wells, D.H. Lawrence, Julian and Aldous Huxley, and Djuna Barnes. I have laid the groundwork here for further investigation of animal *troping* in the works of these authors and other modernist writers. Woolf's writing, as with that of her contemporary modernists, anticipates and articulates pressing concerns in animal studies today, where, as Donna Haraway demonstrates, 'flesh and figure are not far apart' (2003 32). Beastly figurations have implications for actual animals, whose sentience is still under debate despite over 200 years of Darwinism and who are rapidly dying out during the current sixth mass extinction. At the same time, western political discourse still dehumanises marginalised people, including women, racialised others, and the working classes, through animal tropes. Animal studies, as I have demonstrated, is concerned with literal and tropological animals and their discursive synonyms, animalised humans.

I began this thesis shortly after the British Prime Minister at the time, David Cameron, described migrants as 'a swarm' in 2015 (qtd in Elgot and Taylor, np). Around the same time, the UN high commissioner for human rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, condemned right-wing UK columnist Katie Hopkins for comparing migrants to cockroaches (qtd in Jones np). Hussein explained that the word 'cockroaches' was used in Nazi discourse, and by those behind the Rwandan genocide, as a form of incitement to hatred (qtd in Jones np). Both of these instances involve the marginalisation of humans through animal tropes which figure them as insects. Things have not improved since then. In 2018, climate change

denier and (now former) President Donald Trump said that migrants 'aren't people, the[y] are animals' (qtd in Sharman np). Members of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement have also been subject to dehumanisation through animal troping. In June 2020, high profile individuals including Eric Trump (Donald Trump's son) and the rapper and TV personality Trina called BLM protesters 'animals' (qtd in Major np, Smalls np). At the same time, there have been numerous calls for animal rights and vegan activists to both support BLM (Toliver np) and to stop comparing and conflating speciesism and racism, as people become increasingly aware of the problematic discursive associations between animals and racialised humans (Rose np, Somerville np). Furthermore, a victim of the Windrush generation scandal who was deported recalled:

> We were treated like animals, we were strapped up, thrown from one cage to another in the dark; we didn't have a say. The big guys there, just waiting for you to kick off, and then they could fuck you up. We were like animals (anon qtd in de Noronha np).

While animal troping is no longer used to openly encourage eugenicist practise as it was in Darwin and Woolf's lifetimes, animalising figuration is evidently still used to dehumanise and marginalise (often racialised) humans, and to describe the experience of discursive and literal dehumanisation.

Given this situation, it is vital that we respond to Maneesha Deckha's call for 'intersectional analyses of animal issues' (2012). This is work I have only just begun in my thesis, and in my forthcoming volume, co-edited with Alex Goody and featuring work on critical race and modernist studies, *Beastly Modernisms: The Figure of the Animal in Modernist Literature and Culture.* The intersecting issues of race, empire, gender, animality, and class I have discussed demand far more comprehensive scholarly attention than I have

given them here, and still resonate today. Such work might begin with Deckha, Bénédicte Boisseron, and Che Gossett's critical race approaches to animal studies, by engaging with Elizabeth Curry's unpublished PhD thesis 'Refiguring The Animal: Race, Posthumanism, and Modernism' (2019), and by considering the work in *Beastly Modernisms*. Such research would not only draw on postcolonial scholarship but analyse the work of modernists who were themselves racialised. How, we might ask, do authors such as Ahmed Ali, Mulk Raj Anand, Zora Neale Hurston, Langston Hughes, Una Marson, and Nella Larsen figure the animal in their work? How is the animal written at the height of the British empire by those whose ancestors were colonised, rather than colonial administrators like Woolf's relatives? These key questions are only a few of many which have emerged from my research and which I have not been able to address as fully as I would have liked. There is much I could not do here because I was laying the groundwork, establishing the connections between Woolf, Darwin, and animal troping, and setting up a critical framework for further study. I hope to have raised questions that reach beyond this thesis regarding the intersection of empire, race, gender, class and animality in Woolf studies, Darwin studies, modernism, animal studies, and scholarship on troping and figuration.

Other work I would like to have engaged with includes the final published versions of the forthcoming Cambridge editions of *Flush: A Biography* and Bryony Randall's and Laura Marcus's *The Collected Short Fiction of Virginia Woolf*; Jane Goldman's *Virginia Woolf and the Signifying Dog*; Alberto Godioli's and Carmen van den Bergh's *Crossing Borders: Transnational Modernism Beyond the Human*; Hovanec's and Murray's special edition of *Modernism/modernity* on *Reading Modernism in the Sixth Extinction*; and Adkins's *The Modernist Anthropocene: Nonhuman Life and Planetary Change in James Joyce, Virginia Woolf and Djuna Barnes*. I look forward to reading these texts in full. More work is being done on animals and Darwin in modernist writing (though not specifically on troping) including Murray's current research on marine modernism, Setz's research on the

Harlem Renaissance and the eclipse of Darwinism, and Goody's tentatively titled *Of Women and Other Animals,* which considers animality in the work of women modernist writers. My research comes at a prescient moment for considering animals, Darwin, and modernism, bringing troping to the centre of that matrix. Overall then, as well as being useful to Woolf studies and literary modernist studies, I hope, 'little animal that I am' (*TW* 114), that my thesis offers an original contribution to literary animal studies by demonstrating the (r)evolutionary, beastly, multivalent politics of animal tropes, and the impact that such politics has on the ways we treat animals, and animalised humans in Darwin's time, Woolf's time, and in contemporary discourse and life.

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